

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE .....	1873
(BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER) .....	1873
(GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS) .....	1874
RECOGNITION OF GUESTS .....	1876
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS .....	1878
KENSINGTON-MALPEQUE (Gerard 'Turk' Gallant) .....	1878
SOURIS-ELMIRA (Sean Fitzpatrick-6 Zero) .....	1879
CHARLOTTETOWN-PARKDALE (Farmers Market Nutrition Coupon Program) .....	1879
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS TAKEN AS NOTICE .....	1880
HEALTH AND WELLNESS (Hope Air) .....	1881
EDUCATION, EARLY LEARNING AND CULTURE (RCMP check stops) .....	1880
ORAL QUESTIONS .....	1880
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Access to WiFi at Island hospitals) .....	1880
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Government tender and successful bidder) .....	1881
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Cost for free WiFi to Island hospitals) .....	1881
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (Leasing costs for non-existent health clinic in Murray River) .....	1882
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (Delay in keeping promise for clinic) .....	1883
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (Pressure on doctors and nurses at KCMH) .....	1883
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (Commitment to open clinic in Murray River) .....	1884
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Final say on amalgamation decisions) .....	1884
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Forced amalgamation on Three Rivers) .....	1885
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (IRAC a recommending body in amalgamation) .....	1885
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Forced amalgamation on Three Rivers (further) .....	1886
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (IRAC in no-win situation) .....	1886
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Forced amalgamation in Three Rivers (further) .....	1886
CHARLOTTETOWN-PARKDALE (Funding for community partners) .....	1887
CHARLOTTETOWN-PARKDALE (Minister for community NGOs and funding needs) .....	1888

CHARLOTTETOWN-LEWIS POINT (Cruise ship numbers and economic impact) .....	1888
CHARLOTTETOWN-LEWIS POINT (Protection of North Atlantic right whale and cruise ships) .....	1889
MONTAGUE-KILMUIR (Completion date of new manor in Montague) .....	1889
MONTAGUE-KILMUIR (Adjustments and design of new manor) .....	1889
MONTAGUE-KILMUIR (Renaming of new manor in Montague) .....	1890
BORDEN-KINKORA (Access to jetty at former SCI yard for anglers) .....	1890
BORDEN-KINKORA (State of fabrication yard) .....	1891
BORDEN-KINKORA (Timeline for fabrication yard cleanup) .....	1891
BORDEN-KINKORA (Access to jetty at former SCI yard for anglers (further) .....	1892
BORDEN-KINKORA (Emails from chief conservation officers) .....	1892
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS .....	1892
WORKFORCE AND ADVANCED LEARNING (Debt Reduction and Island Advantage Summary) .....	1893
COMMUNITIES, LAND AND ENVIRONMENT (Earth Day) .....	1894
HEALTH AND WELLNESS (AED Registry) .....	1896
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS.....	1898
INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS.....	1898
BILL 31 – Cannabis Taxation Agreement Act.....	1898
ORDERS OF THE DAY (GOVERNMENT) .....	1899
ESTIMATES .....	1899
JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY .....	1899
MOTION 43 – Calling on the Legislative Assembly to adopt a clear question for the upcoming referendum on democratic renewal .....	1907
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM .....	1908
RURAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT .....	1910
PREMIER .....	1913
ADJOURNED.....	1915

The Legislature sat at 10:00 a.m.

Matters of Privilege

**Ms. Compton:** Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning on a matter of privilege and contempt.

Section 27 of the *Legislative Assembly Act* lays out the privileges of our House are the same as exercised by the House of Commons of Canada.

Section 31 of the *Legislative Assembly Act* states that the Legislative Assembly has all the rights and privileges of a court of record for the purpose of summarily inquiring into and punishing as breaches of privilege or as a contempt of court a clear and definitive list of acts and things.

Section 31(b) reads: obstructing, threatening or attempting to force or intimidate members of the Legislative Assembly.

On Wednesday, I rose in this Chamber in the course of parliamentary proceedings to pose legitimate questions that I genuinely believe to be true and worthy of an investigation.

*Beauchesne Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, sixth edition, Section 75 states:

The privilege of freedom of speech is both the least questioned and the most fundamental right of the Member of Parliament.

Section 93 reads: It is generally accepted that any threat, or attempt to influence the vote of, or actions of a Member, is breach of privilege.

Section 99 reads: Direct threats which attempt to influence Members' actions in the House are undoubtedly breaches of privilege.

*Erskine May's Parliamentary Practices, 21st Edition*, has the following to say on molestation, reflections and intimidation of members:

To molest Members on account of their conduct in Parliament is also a contempt. Correspondence with Members of an insulting character in reference to their

conduct in Parliament or reflecting on their conduct as Members, threatening a Member with the possibility of a trial at some future time for a question asked in House, or proposing to visit a pecuniary loss on him on account of conduct in Parliament have all been considered contempts.

I would refer Members to the Report of the Committee of Privilege, House of Commons 284. May goes on to say: To attempt to intimidate a Member in his parliamentary conduct by threats is also a contempt.

*Griffith and Ryle's Parliament: Functions, Practice and Procedures* states: As the House has power to punish those who offend it (a power which the courts do not challenge) so the House is competent to define and decide of those actions which it may punish.

Griffith and Ryle outline previous examples of actions found to be in contempt to include molesting members of account of their conduct in Parliament, for example by inciting newspaper readers to telephone a Member to complain of a Question he had tabled.

Parliamentary privilege has been developed over a very long period of time. The freedom to make allegations, which the member genuinely believes at the time to be true or at least worthy of investigation, is fundamental to our democracy. Without this freedom individual members' defence of the interests of their constituents and others would be severely constrained.

On Wednesday during Question Period, I rose and asked tough questions on behalf of Islanders. When I thought about asking those questions, I thought about my reputation, my integrity, my role as an MLA, and a role as a member of the opposition. Everyone in this house knows this isn't an easy job. But, on Wednesday, I did my job. I showed leadership and anyone who wants to challenge me on that, I welcome their conversation. I'm not going to lie. After I asked those questions I had a range of emotions, but I know I did my job. I will not be ashamed by my questions.

When Islanders try to silence members of this Chamber with threats, it does not help democracy. These people who are

threatening me claim to want a better system yet they have stooped to tactics that they would condemn themselves.

Yesterday, when I arrived at the office I was faced with the threat of a law suit. If that's an attempt to stifle me, so be it. I am not going to stop standing up for Islanders. I have been accused of slander, libel, of abusing my privilege as an MLA, which shows a direct contempt to this House. Later today I will be tabling some of these posts and comments made to me online over the last 48 hours.

If members of this House, or for that matter, members of the public, think for one second, I sat up in my office and cooked up this story, you don't know me very well. I have integrity; I was raising these concerns on behalf of Islanders who came to us as the official opposition, and that happens to be our job. They came to my office in confidence because you can see how I was treated over the last 48 hours. Do you blame them?

I sat in this House and voting in favor of Proportional Representation; the will of my district. I don't regret that. But, I will not stop from raising the concerns of Islanders about the coalition simply because I supported them. I had numerous women from my district reach out supporting me for asking those tough questions and for standing up for Islanders. The only other person who reached out to me was Dr. Sarah Stewart-Clark, who is truly an advocate for all Islanders. I then sat in the Legislature last night and received a Facebook message about a video that was posted with another threat of legal action.

Not once did one the women's group reach out to me. Where was the support from the Women's Network of PEI? The Advisory Council for the Status of Women? The PEI Coalition for Women in Government? Are these groups who claim we are all one group, do they believe now that I am not worth supporting because I stood up for what was right? Do they really support all women?

There are five of us in this Chamber. We need to rise up and support everyone.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I ask all strong men and women on Prince Edward Island to stand up for this House and protect our democracy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** [Applause]

**Speaker:** Hon. member, I will take that under advisement.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

#### Point of Privilege

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise on a serious and troubling point of privilege.

Under the *Legislative Assembly Act*, all members of this House have the same privileges and immunities as are vested in members of the House of Commons.

I rise to address one of the most important and sacred of those privileges: the privilege to be free from obstruction, interference, influence and intimidation in the fulfillment of our parliamentary duties.

As *Beauchesne*, 6th Edition, writes at paragraph 99: Direct threats which attempt to influence members' actions in the House are undoubtedly breaches of privilege.

The *House of Commons Procedure and Practice Manual*, Third Edition, also describes this privilege. The authors write as follows in Chapter 3:

Speakers have consistently upheld the right of the House to the services of its members free from intimidation, obstruction and interference.

Speaker Lamoureux stated in a 1973 ruling that he had: no hesitation in reaffirming the principle that parliamentary privilege includes the right of a member to discharge his responsibilities as a member of the House free from threats or attempts at intimidation.

As Speaker Bosley noted in 1986: If an hon. member is impeded or obstructed in the

performance of his or her parliamentary duties through threats, intimidation, bribery attempts or other improper behaviour, such a case would fall within the limits of parliamentary privilege. Should an hon. member be able to say that something has happened which prevented him or her from performing functions, that he or she has been threatened, intimidated, or in any way unduly influenced, there would be a case for the Chair to consider.

In ruling on another question of privilege, Speaker Bosley stated: Further that the threat or attempt at intimidation cannot be hypothetical, but must be real or have occurred.

I am sorry to say that I must rise to report such a direct threat, a threat which is not hypothetical, which is real and has occurred. I have with me screen shots of threats made to me on Facebook by a member of the public who takes issue with the opposition's questions and concerns regarding the recent discovery that the Third Party may have been misusing voter data obtained from the PR Coalition. This individual says, and I quote: Steven, I can assure you that these statements you are making are false, defamatory and libellous. Those are legal terms. That's an implied threat of a law suit.

But it goes further. He says, and I quote: I have great respect for your passionate advocacy for your constituents, but you do your party and its donors, who may be responsible for the consequences of your repeating said defamatory libel, by repeating these demonstrable untruths.

This is clearly a threat of legal action not only against me, but to my party and its donors. It is a threat, no matter how poorly worded, that my party will be financially on the hook as the result of my work as a member of this very House. It is a threat that if I don't be quiet, and stop doing my job, they'll be coming after me and members of my party, and hit them in the pocketbook. I guess he's saying that members of our party should join with him in threatening me to be quiet. That's sad in so many ways, and this from the people, who want to fix our democratic system. If that's how to fix it, I'm happy to stick with what is broke.

These threats are a sad attempt to intimidate me into not doing my job. This is an attempt to threaten me from not doing my sworn duty of this House and my constituents.

We do not raise important questions like this lightly or without evidence. Our questions and concerns are based on facts from individuals with knowledge of those facts. Veiled threats of legal action will not stop us from doing our job. It is a clear breach of the privilege of every single member of this House regardless of what party they belong to.

I will not be silenced by such threats. I will not be threatened from doing my parliamentary duties. No threat of legal action or any other threat will influence how we do business in this House.

Actions like this cut to the very heart of our democracy. The irony that is, is that it's coming from the very people, who are supposedly trying to improve our democratic system. They're off to a bad start.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you make it crystal clear that threats of this nature are never acceptable. They are a form of contempt of this House and they are a form of contempt for this democratic system.

These aggressive and confrontational campaign tactics have no place in PEI politics. These are campaign tactics that are taught and practiced in large, national and international pressure campaigns like Greenpeace and 350.org; the very organizations that these self-professed campaigners do work for.

I hope I am joined by all hon. members of this House in stating in a clear, unanimous voice that these threats have no place in our province. Ask legitimate questions to address real concerns raised by a member of the public are not attacks are characterized by the Green Party backroom.

I call upon every member of this House to denounce any threats or attempt to intimidate members. It doesn't matter where a person stands on an issue. It doesn't matter whether they're a Tory, a Liberal, an NDP or a Green, we cannot allow sad attempts at

intimidation, obstruction or threatening a member of this House from doing our jobs.

Debate. Argue. Go to the press. Get on TV. Write a letter to the editor. Do whatever to make your point, but you cannot threaten a member of this House to keep them quiet. It cannot be tolerated. It must not be tolerated. We will not be silenced.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking you to protect and uphold one of the most sacred privileges of this House and I will table evidence later today of the described threat.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** Hon. member, that will also be taken under advisement.

#### Recognition of Guests

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** I want to welcome everyone who has joined us in the gallery today. Those, who are viewing from home or online, and, of course, our colleagues, and you, Mr. Speaker, and our staff as we come to the end of our third week of this sitting.

In the gallery we have a group of paramedics and the dispatchers – representing the heart and stroke and some of our public servants who are here and will be introduced later.

We've got a very impressive group of new Prince Edward Islanders that we are pleased to see, here, and share with us in this process of democracy. And welcome everyone else who is with us in the gallery, today.

This afternoon is the University of Prince Edward Island's School of Sustainable Design Engineering's day to have a student design expo showcasing the best in student work and, in particular, sustainable and green engineering right here in Prince Edward Island and Atlantic Canada.

There's always something new that's coming. We know that even since that school was started they've solved some problems. It's really about problem solving

that are making a difference right here on Prince Edward Island.

Sunday, is Earth Day. A day that encourages us all to get outside; to be mindful of our environment and our stewardship, the importance of sustainability, and to be responsible, at the same time, as we recognize how we can enjoy all of the benefits that we have of the earth that is celebrated on Sunday.

Finally, as we come in today and saw that sprinkling of what is sometimes called fertilizer when it comes at this time of year, I was reminded of a conversation I had with a gentleman, who was at a meeting in Souris on Wednesday of last week. He has seen his share of winter transitioning into spring, various ways that, kind of, shows itself, over his years. He said to me that if you want to enjoy spring on in Prince Edward Island you have to know how to look for it. It's good advice for all of us to make sure we're looking for spring – we head into the weekend, I want to wish everyone a happy weekend.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise in the Legislative Assembly here today on this, the last day of the week. And, to also welcome the many people that have joined us here in the gallery, today. It's great to see the gallery filled.

I wanted to bring to everyone's attention, a very special concert that would be held this coming Saturday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 7:30 p.m. at Trinity United Church. Rawlins Cross will be putting on a concert, fronted by PEI and Stratford's very Joey Kitson. More importantly, I'm very, very proud to announce the Kitson Family Band will actually be opening for Rawlins Cross that evening. The Kitson Family Band is made up of Julien, Gabrielle and Annie Kitson, all of which are Joey and Nancy Kitson's children. They hail, of course, from Startford, and ironically they live on Aylward Drive.

I'd also like to recognize Sunday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> as Earth Day. You just have to scan today's *The Guardian*, or Facebook or any form of social media, newsletters from different communities, just to see the various activities that are going to be held all across Prince Edward Island in celebration of Earth Day. I do encourage all Islanders to get out; look around your community, see what's happening, and get involved to celebrate this very important day.

Just in closing, I'd also like to bring to the attention a very important meeting that will be held in Stratford this coming Monday evening, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, at 7:00 p.m., takes place at the Stratford Town Hall and it is the Stratford Area Watershed Improvement Group. They're having their annual general meeting.

This year, they have a very special keynote speaker; Jordi Segers will be there. Jordi is actually the Bat White Nose Syndrome Program Coordinator for the Atlantic vet college. It's going to be a very informative discussion. I encourage all to attend.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody to the Assembly today, and those who are joining us in the gallery, particularly the large contingent of new Islanders who are with us, and the paramedics, who are here. Welcome to, what I'm sure will be an interesting day in the Legislature.

I also would like to make mention of the event this afternoon at the school of sustainability, sustainable design at UPEI. A place where they are trying to figure out ways where humanity can live comfortably and sustainably here on Mother Earth, and, of course, April 22<sup>nd</sup> is Earth Day, so it's a perfect time to go out there. There will be a statement, I understand, later this morning, on Earth Day from one of the ministers. I look forward to speaking a little bit more at length about that later.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale.

**Mr. Dumville:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody here today, especially our new PEI citizens. I'd also like – I see Peter Meggs, is here with us, today. Welcome.

I'd like to welcome the paramedics here, today. They're the person you, when you're in trouble, they're the person you want to see coming through the door. You do a great job and thank you for all you do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

**Mr. Henderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, want to welcome those to the gallery, especially those from Island EMS. Our paramedics are important people in the delivery of emergency services to Islanders. I happen to have a depot in the riding of O'Leary-Inverness. I certainly want to thank them for all the hard work that they do.

I know we're recognizing some days here, but for those who might not know it, but Saturday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, is actually national Record Store Day in Canada. We do have a number of Island record stores, and as a bit of a collector myself, it's good to encourage people to preserve music and get out and listen to music. We have a lot of great Island performers here.

On a sadder note, I wanted to inform this House that a great leader in the agricultural community has passed away, Allan Ling from the Wheatley River area. He was a great advocate for the grains industry and cattle industry on Prince Edward Island. He represented PEI in the Atlantic Grains Council. I'm sure this House passes on condolences to him and his family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It does give me great pleasure to rise here, today, and welcome all those to the gallery. The person I want to recognize today is not sitting in the gallery, but she's sitting right across from me. I want to thank her for getting up and being a strong woman and speaking on behalf of strong women. As my critic, I have always respected every question you've ever let my way. You've held my feet to the fire and I appreciate that.

I want you to know, even though the groups might not have been there for you, I'm here for you, so please reach out.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

**Ms. Casey:** (Indistinct) Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to welcome everyone here, too and I want to lend my support to the Opposition House Leader on her courage to stand and ask questions in this House, but also have the courage today to call people out when they impugn upon the rights of any member for asking those questions.

As Minister of Status of Women, we all talk as parties of engaging with more women to come to the political process, but this is a clear hindrance as to why other women would want to – and, I mean, other men. Men should not have to endure this either. The Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, as an elected member should not have to be subjected to the kind of attacks that have occurred because we are hon. members of the Legislative Assembly of PEI, and contrary to what the Green Party may say, it's an honourable profession. It's an honourable job that we all do on behalf of Islanders. I want to personally lend my support to the Member from Belfast-Murray River on her courage to get up and speak on behalf of all of us.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everyone to the gallery. A special welcome to all the paramedics and thank you for what you do on a daily basis; to all the newcomers that are here today.

I'd also like to send out a great big congratulations to the Arsenault's Fish Mart Redwings hockey division, who won the Island championship last night, and will be going onto the Don Johnson Memorial Cup, next week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Statements by Members

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Gerard 'Turk' Gallant**

**Mr. MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise in the Legislature, today and recognize a hockey icon, and Summerside native, Gerard 'Turk' Gallant.

Gallant's competitive spirit and strong work ethic are what drove him to be one of most successful athletes to ever come out of PEI.

Gallant's interest in the sport of hockey was evident at a young age, as he would often be found sweeping the stands with his buddies in exchange for extra ice time.

By the young age of 16, he was playing with a local junior A team. It wouldn't be long before the major junior teams took notice of his talent, and soon, were at his doorstep. He got his start with the Sherbrooke Beavers of the Quebec league in the fall of 1980 at the age of 17 and was the runner-up for the league's rookie of the year award.

Gallant got a shot in the NHL in 1984 with the Detroit Redwings. Over the next eight seasons he averaged 72 games and 56 points a year, including four consecutive 70-plus point seasons from 1986 to 1990.

His impressive NHL career would eventually take him to the Tampa Bay Lightning, and his ultimate retirement in 1995.

His coaching career has been just as successful and the Vegas Golden Knights are lucky to have him.

It's not just hockey that Turk gives back to. His involvement in the community is second to none. He has always been a huge supporter of the Summerside Boys and Girls Club, and was a celebrity at last year's golf tournament. As Gallant said: I grew up with the Boys and Girls Club in Summerside from six-years-old to 16-years-old, and I was there every day, so it was a big part of my life.

On behalf of myself and all Islanders, we want to wish Turk Gallant the best in coaching the Golden Knights toward a Stanley Cup.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

### **Sean Fitzpatrick-6 Zero**

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today and recognize an entrepreneur and a Souris native, Sean Fitzpatrick in his upstart business, 6 Zero. Sean with the help of his roommate Kenny McKinnon, also from Souris, launched his business out of his apartment in Halifax.

Originally from Souris and a graduate from Souris Regional High School in 2014, Fitzpatrick started his business degree at UPEI before transferring to Saint Mary's University. He launched 6 Zero in January and the business has really taken off. Fitzpatrick came up with the name 6 Zero in related to the business goals he wants to achieve, as well as the fact that there are six zeros in one million. He follows those goals – goals are a million in sales, a million customers, and a million followers on social media, he said.

Sean was able to start the business with the help of a small loan from his grandmother, which he says he has already paid it back. The business sells its navigator and nautical design watches and stainless steel rings as well as men's, women's, and unisex clothing – sweatshirts, hoodies, short and long-sleeved shirts and tank tops, and bracelets.

Sean's products have received a ringing endorsement from Canadian UFC fighter Elias Theodorou. His future goal is to partner with a retailer and have his products available in stores. As we know it's a small business that drives our economy and having young entrepreneurs who are so innovative will only help grow our economy.

I want to wish Sean all the best as he continues to grow and expand his business into the future.

Thank You, Mr. Speaker

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

### **Farmers Market Nutrition Coupon Program**

**Ms. Bell:** I'm really pleased today to speak about the Charlottetown Farmers Market Nutrition Coupon Program. The Charlottetown Farmers Market is in its fifth year of putting \$10,000 towards a program that provides healthy eating options for those in need. This program was started by the general manager of the market, Bernie Plourde, who saw that need and the market, a non-profit organization, invests \$5,000 of its own yearly revenues into the initiative.

They received initial funding for the program from the Department of Health and Wellness to kick it off and they've had various investments from other places, including the Credit Union, but this year they received an additional \$5,000 from the PEI Burger Love Give Back campaign. So that total \$10,000 is used with the market to partner with organizations including Chances, the PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada, and PEERS Alliance – formerly AIDS PEI – as partners to help identify families who would benefit from the initiative. Participation is anonymous.

Access to proper nutrition continues to be an issue for low-income Islanders and this nutrition coupon program provides \$15 worth of coupons each week for 16 weeks through the summer, which the participants can spend at the market to purchase local veggies, cheese and eggs, meat and fish from local vendors. The goal is to help 45 families this year, including over 70 children. The many local farmers and

producers will also benefit as the money is spent directly with them at the market. It's a great example of a local, grassroots initiative that is really making a difference in the community and I am so proud and pleased to recognize Bernie Plourde and the great work that's happening at that cooperative in my district.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday during Question Period in questions from the Member from Morell-Mermaid, I'd like to bring some corrections to some of the responses that I may have had yesterday in regards to some research that I did last night in regards to the Hope Air program. In actual fact, the flight program and the bus program does cover costs for an essential companion to go with the patient if required and when it comes to bus and ferry coverage, as well, there is no questions – or who may be in the vehicle as well. Just want to bring some clarity to those points that I made yesterday.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just to be clear, I'm rising in my capacity as minister of justice and further to discussions on estimates here yesterday evening, the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira and Borden-Kinkora had raised questions about RCMP check stops. I'm happy to bring back that just on a preliminary check, in terms of reporting that we had had in our office in the month of March, there were at least five check stops conducted in rural areas of Prince Edward Island. In the area around Montague, there was one. In the area around Souris, there was one. In the area around O'Leary, there was a traffic initiative resulting in 20 summary offence tickets. The area around Tignish, there was one traffic initiative resulting in 23 summary offence tickets. At the community request in Borden,

RCMP patrols and visible traffic enforcement were stepped up through the month of March.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Hon. minister, I just might add for everybody's information, questions coming from estimates should be responded to in estimates. Okay?

Thank you.

#### Questions by Members

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm quite confident stating that many Islanders, if not all Islanders at one time or another, have had a stay in one of our hospital facilities here on PEI, or have had to visit a loved one that has an extended stay in hospital. The ability to stay connected with family and friends can help patients in our healthcare system feel less isolated as they go through sometimes lengthy stays.

#### **Access to WiFi at Island hospitals**

My first question is to the minister of health: How many Island hospitals currently have full access to public WiFi for patients and visitors alike?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the best of my knowledge, I believe most hospitals have some WiFi coverage. It may not be in all rooms, but for the most part there is some WiFi coverage. I do understand and realize based on some recent conversations with the foundation at PCH, there are issues there with WiFi. They've been looking to have that installed for some time.

We're looking into that and hopefully we can resolve that in the very near future. Obviously we know that there's great need for people to be in touch and when they're with their family to be able to utilize those

services. So, we are looking into that matter at the PCH to try to deal with it in the very near future.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Two years ago, government piloted limited public WiFi access at the QEH and the Souris Hospital. I might add, I'd like to personally thank the Lions Club in Souris for helping to fund that.

**Mr. LaVie:** Great organization.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Mr. Speaker, government then committed to have full public WiFi access in all Island hospitals in the coming months.

Question to the minister of health: Why wasn't this commitment met?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly we worked with groups associated with hospitals, whether it's foundations, whether it's other service groups in areas where hospitals are, to work collaboratively on approaches when it comes to areas such as WiFi. We will continue to do that in the future. In today's needs, people need to be connected online and we certainly want to support that when we can.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Again I go back; it was just two long years ago that this government – the then health minister – made the statement that this would be forthcoming in short order. It would be completed within months.

**Government tender and successful bidder**

Question to the minister of health: Did government tender for this work, and if so, who was the successful bidder?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't have at my fingertips any of that information on tendering or who may have won those. I know from conversations with the Prince County Hospital Foundation, their discussions, primarily, have been with Eastlink, but I don't believe that there's any specific course that we have to take in regards to this. We should be talking to all vendors, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, there were no tenders issued. There was no work done. Since government publicly announced this project, again, over two long years ago, you'd hope that the project costs, at the very least, would have been nailed down.

**Cost for free WiFi to Island hospitals**

Question to the minister of health: What will it cost to install free public WiFi access to all Island hospitals?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I certainly don't have that information, but based on a conversation I had earlier this week with my deputy, those investigations have begun. We will be looking at what the possibilities are for providing this service. Obviously, there are costs associated and it will take some time to get those numbers together. We are on track and working on that, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I think everyone in this House would agree with me, or anybody tuning in, as well, that you can pretty much go into any restaurant or coffee shop across PEI, except, maybe, in some of the rural areas, and have access to WiFi. It just is confusing to me why this government would make this announcement well over two years ago, yet, no work has been done.

Question again, to the minister: When will free public WiFi access be available for use by patients, and visitors at all Island hospitals as promised by your government?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We will certainly put full effort on this issue. It has been brought to me, my attention by various groups associated with hospitals. It's a concern that needs to be addressed. We will do our full due diligence on this issue. We will get some pricing. We will figure out some issues that need to be resolved. Obviously, there are some infrastructure needs in facilities and ways to manoeuvre cabling and things like that. We'll be looking at all those points, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Since 2011, the province has been paying \$40,000 a year in leasing costs for a health clinic in Murray River. The only problem is there is no health clinic in Murray River.

#### **Leasing costs for non-existent health clinic in Murray River**

Why are the taxpayers paying lease costs for a non-existent health clinic in Murray River, hon. minister of health?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, in the past, we did offer a clinic in the Murray River area. Obviously, we were pleased and proud to provide that service in

that area. However, the uptake was not that great. It wasn't as it was expected, and apparently a lot of the residents preferred to travel to Montague for their health needs. That building, or that facility is not used as a clinic today, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, they might prefer to go to Montague, but there were no doctors in Montague for them. The health clinic that I talk about was to be staffed by a nurse practitioner. It was first promised by this government in the 2010 throne speech. Government signed the clinic lease in 2011 at \$40,000 a year.

Question to the health minister: How long is this lease for, and can we expect a health clinic there before the lease expires?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, when you take on contractual obligations such as a building like this, you do have to fulfill the contract that you signed, too.

Obviously, if there is need in the area. If residents in the area would like to revisit the possibility of a clinic being put back in that area, certainly, that's something that we would be happy to speak with them about, and look if that's an opportunity.

Obviously, I've been to my feet on many occasions over the last several weeks talking about the Kings County area as a region. We are looking at ways and means of providing that medical service, the good health care service to the people of that Kings County region. If that's an option in the future, certainly, we'd be pleased to look at that, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd just like to clarify, there was never a clinic there, so you're not putting it back. It's now 2018, and the residents of Murray River still don't have a health clinic that they were promised eight years ago by this government.

### **Delay in keeping promise for clinic**

What's the delay in keeping this eight-year promise, the eight-year election promise to the residents of Murray River?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, we want to provide the absolute best health care to Islanders, no matter whether it's in Murray River, whether it's in Souris, whether it's in O'Leary, Alberton or Tignish.

When we're looking at areas, we want to be able to provide the coverage, and the physician coverage, as well. Obviously, if any physician would like to go and set-up practice there, we would strongly encourage that. If a nurse practitioner would like to be part of that collaborative approach out of that facility, we would certainly support that, as well.

We will continue to look in that area, all areas of Kings County, to see how we can meet the full needs of every citizen from that region, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The government talked earlier in this House sitting about a full complement of doctors in Montague, but we know that doesn't mean everyone in Kings County has a doctor.

We know the patient registry is a mess. I've talked about it in the House before about some of those patients being told don't get on the patient registry because we have a separate list.

Question to the health minister: Are you committed to keeping this government's

eight-year-old promise for a health clinic in Murray River?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to assure the hon. member that, as my mandate as minister of health, I am very focused on providing the best possible health care services to all Islanders, no matter where they live on Prince Edward Island.

Obviously, when we talk about the Kings County area and the full complement of doctors there, that's very uplifting for that region. It's keeping the ER open. It's keeping it sustainable. But, from time to time doctors do need some time off, and those things vary as time moves out.

We know that there's another nurse practitioner that we're looking at to go to that area. I think we're trying to improve the situation there to the best of our ability and will continue to do that into the future, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, the Leader of the Opposition brought up the pressures on the Kings County Memorial Hospital emergency room. He noted there are no evening walk-in clinics in Kings County and no walk-in clinics, at all, in the Montague area.

### **Pressure on doctors and nurses at KCMH**

Question to the health minister: If the health clinic in Murray River was open, wouldn't that help alleviate some of the pressure of those doctors and nurses in the emergency room in Montague?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, I do know that there are patients that are looking for doctors. Any citizens on Prince Edward Island, any Islander that does

not have a doctor, I do encourage them to register on the patient registry.

When I was speaking, last week, I made reference to our recruitment and retention team that are working hard to recruit doctors, find doctors to come to Prince Edward Island to work in all areas of Prince Edward Island. Rural areas are a little harder to recruit for, but we are looking for doctors to go to West Prince, to go to Kings County

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) seven years no.

**Mr. Mitchell:** – to go to east Prince, to go to Charlottetown area because we have work for all of them, and we like to encourage them to come to Prince Edward Island.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) private sector (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's a full complement of doctors in Montague now. That's what we're told. If the Murray River health clinic was open and staffed by a nurse care practitioner aligned with the doctors for the people of Southern Kings to access care closer to home, wouldn't that lower the pressure on the emergency room?

### **Commitment to open clinic in Murray River**

If you're already paying for the space, let's be fiscally responsible and let's finish the job and open the health care in Murray River. Will you commit to that, minister?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier week, or perhaps it was the end of last week, I did commit to looking at walk-in clinics in that Kings county area. I have discussions started within the department on that to look at that possibility.

I assume that they, probably haven't, as it's early days, they haven't reached out to the

doctors to see how they could play a role, or the nurse practitioners in the area, for that matter, how they could play a role.

It is a commitment that I made to look at that, walk-in clinics in that Kings County region. As I said to the hon. member, if there's an appetite for that in that region and the residents feel they could go to that area for service. Certainly, that would be in – the places that we would look, Mr. Speaker.

**Leader of the Opposition:** There's more than an appetite, there's a need.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When government tried to engineer school closures last year, it said it was using an arms-length body to run a fair and transparent process. We all know what the actual facts were when it was said and done.

Now, it seems government is dusting off that old playbook when it comes to forced amalgamation that's on their agenda.

### **Final say on amalgamation decisions**

Question to the communities' minister: Who has the final say on your forced amalgamation, you guys or IRAC?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's a good question, and it's a question that's laid out in *Municipalities Act*, but I want to thank the member from the Georgetown area for his commitment and his work for his constituents down there. It's good that he has his constituents involved and they are well informed of the process that's in place because of him.

As the act outlines, IRAC will conduct public meetings over the next month or two. There is an opportunity for a mediator to be hired and to look into different ways to do things. They will make a decision, and that will come to me and I will forward that decision, the IRAC decision, onto the Cabinet to make the final decision.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, IRAC doesn't have any decision-making power. They are a recommendation body, so they'll make a recommendation and it's not a decision. Cabinet actually has the complete and final say in the Three Rivers forced amalgamation. It was the *Municipalities Act* that this government brought in and that the third party voted for that put us in this predicament.

### **Forced amalgamation on Three Rivers**

Question to the minister: Is mirroring the flawed school closure plan the best way for your government to get what it wants, that is a forced amalgamation in Three Rivers?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The government is committed to strong communities right across Prince Edward Island. If we have strong communities across Prince Edward Island with local representation, local involvement, that will make Prince Edward Island a better place for all Islanders.

Our government has been working extremely hard to make Prince Edward Island the mighty Island it is. We are mighty. We are small, but we are mighty, and we're mighty because we have community groups and community people all throughout Prince Edward Island working together to make Prince Edward Island better. That's what this process is all about; making Prince Edward Island a mighty Island which is better for every Islander on Prince Edward Island.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Members of this House will remember when the bill was on the floor, there was a lot of objection from the official opposition about the amount of power it was giving the minister and Cabinet and how little power it

actually gave the residents of Prince Edward Island.

The government voted for it anyways. The third party voted for it anyways, and the third party has had three different positions on it since that, but that's besides the points.

### **IRAC a recommending body in amalgamation**

Why do you think using IRAC as a front to advance your government's amalgamation agenda is a path that Islanders want you to follow?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have respect for IRAC. IRAC is an independent body, non-partisan, contrary to some opinions. They work on behalf of all Islanders. IRAC controls fuel prices on Prince Edward Island, allowing Islanders to be known of a monthly adjustment. They smooth out the fuel prices. They listen to rental concerns. They listen to appeals. They take care of our land management, our *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.*, protecting Islanders' rights to the property here in Prince Edward Island.

I think IRAC is the best place to do this, instead of on the floor of this Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One might argue that IRAC isn't doing a great job in controlling the gas prices or following the monthly adjustments either. Gas is adjusting here all the time, and as I had said previous, they are a recommending body when it comes to this – and it's prescribed in the legislation that they are only to provide a recommendation, which means that the ultimate decision gets made at Cabinet, which is the way you guys wanted it and it's the way the Green Party wanted it.

After the contentious Public Schools Branch battle last year to close several schools, the public backlash came within 24 hours and your Cabinet reversed the decision.

**Forced amalgamation on Three Rivers (further)**

Question to the minister: If IRAC were to recommend a forced amalgamation for Three Rivers, what's to stop Cabinet from ignoring it anyways and just making your own decision?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member has mentioned the word 'power' a number of times. The process that has been outlined in the *Municipal Government Act* returns – gives the power to the people of the area.

IRAC now has posted it on its website, has made advertisements in the paper. The process is online. There will be public hearings and public consultations. There are all kinds of opportunity for the people of the Three Rivers area to make comments, for municipalities in the area to make comments. This act, this process, has empowered the people of the area and it is a good process that the people are front and centre in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, as the hon. member across would know, there's been very little opportunity for the public in Three Rivers to have their input. It's been very shielded and quiet because the people who were organizing knew at the end of the day that the minister was going to have the full power, because that's what the Liberals wanted and that's what the Green Party wanted. They didn't want people to have a say. They wanted all the decisions to be made at a Cabinet table in Charlottetown. That's the Green Party way and that's the Liberal way.

**IRAC in no-win situation**

Question to the minister: Aren't you putting IRAC in a no-win situation on forced amalgamation, just like you did to the Public Schools Branch on school closures?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, the process that has been outlined in the *Municipal Government Act* empowers all Prince Edward Islanders to get involved in their communities and making Prince Edward Island a better place to live, work and play, and raise a family.

This government is committed to putting more effort on a bigger population here on Prince Edward Island and this government has worked extremely hard to move that population into the rural area because we know strong communities right across Prince Edward Island make a strong province. A strong province is good for the families of Prince Edward Island, the people of Prince Edward Island, and we're committed to making a strong Island for all Islanders right across Prince Edward Island.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think government needs to be straight up with the people in the Three Rivers area what their plans are. I've been very consistent on where I stand on this. I'm against amalgamation. I'm against forced amalgamation. If the people of the area vote for it, then I support democracy. I'm not like the Liberal party who wants all of the decisions made in Charlottetown, and I'm not like Liberal light party over here who wants their cake and eat it too.

**Forced amalgamation in Three Rivers (further)**

Question to the minister: Isn't it high time you level with Islanders about your government's forced amalgamation and what the plan really is?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have to understand that this process started from a community-based group down in the Three Rivers area. A number of well-minded, well-thoughtful Islanders that wanted to make Prince Edward Island a better place; came together in a cooperative, volunteer way to think of ideas of how they can make their community, their area, their place on Prince Edward Island, a better place for them.

Discussions have been going on now for close to three years in this area. Representatives from each community have been on this committee; representatives from the unincorporated area have been on this committee. They put together a plan for their area, for their future, for their families. I think we owe it to this group to allow them the opportunity to present their case in front of IRAC and for the other groups in the area to present their case in front of IRAC, and to have IRAC come back with a recommendation to Cabinet.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** Good job.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the recent Budget press release, we heard that nearly \$1 million in new funding for community partners was invested above and beyond annual commitments in 2017-2018 to empower Islanders and connect them to jobs.

The press conference announcing this funding was about supporting great PEI community groups and responding to the #MeToo movement, yet the Budget press documents have it under the heading of Jobs Funding for Communities.

### **Funding for community partners**

A question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: How were these projects selected, and how will Islanders know how the spending has been effective?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over here, we believe that every Islander deserves the opportunity to have a rich, fulfilling and successful life. We design programs and services around helping those Islanders do just that.

Last year was a very strong year economically for Prince Edward Island and we ended up with a surplus. We had some year-end funding. We have been working side-by-side with our community partners throughout the year. We're on a constant basis in touch with them because they know their clients, so we had been working on projects with them already.

So when we had this money come to us and we were told to reach out, we reached out to those NGOs and those community partners that had valid, worthwhile projects that were going to make a huge impact in Island communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, your first supplementary.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So unfortunately, we still don't know how they were selected, but I'd agree that having this money going into the community is a fantastic opportunity to see money going to great projects and to great organizations. The challenge is that this funding is a one-year grant as confirmed by your representative from your department.

What will happen to these important initiatives and the associated jobs when the project funding of one year is completed?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we value our community partners and we work very, very closely with them. Every year, when it comes to budget time, we sit down with them and we review their

budgets with them – what their needs are. How can we help make their lives easier so that they can, indeed, help Islanders' lives?

You could ask the community partners that we did support and some of those that were there at that press conference, they didn't receive any funding, but they were there to support the organizations that did because they know that when we work together, we all thrive.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, your second supplementary.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **Minister for community NGOs and funding needs**

Community group project funds, especially when they are for one-time projects, are allocated to a generic grant line in various departments, which makes reporting and tracking them really challenging. Given that this is being recognized as something of economic importance and job creation and that there is an economic impact and value of the community sector, isn't it time that we have a single point of responsibility, maybe a minister, for community NGOs and their funding needs?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think that each individual department and each individual minister knows the needs and they work closely with their community partners on what their needs are. To have one person to try and stretch them across the various, various needs, I think wouldn't be a good idea.

We are working closely with our NGOs, closely with our community partners, closely with the families and the clients that are impacted by the services that they provide and we will continue to work closely with those community partners.

Actually, I'm having a sit-down next week in Hunter River with our community

partners to see how we can move forward and make sure that they have sustainable funding that they know year-after-year.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

**Ms. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This morning my question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Minister, the Port of Charlottetown, the City of Charlottetown, and tourism operators all across our Island are waiting with anticipation so that we can shower our visitors to the first cruise ship on May 2<sup>nd</sup> with true Island hospitality.

### **Cruise ship numbers and economic impact**

Minister: How many cruise ships are expected this year in the Port of Charlottetown, how many visitors can we expect, and what is the economic impact?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm proud to talk about our tourism industry and the 7,700 full-time equivalents that are employed here on PEI in that sector and the \$450 million that comes in each year in revenues. 2017 was a record year in the cruise ship industry and 2018 is forecast to be another record year. We're expecting 92 ships and 117,000 visitors to come to the Port of Charlottetown this year with an economic impact of almost \$20 million.

So, we know that cruise ships play a very important role in the economy of PEI and an additional investment that this government has made into tourism is a \$3.5 million injection into the cultural action plan to make PEI an even better destination.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

**Ms. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, I'm thrilled to hear 117,000 visitors will get to experience our wonderful and true Island hospitality. I know that tourism is so important to our economy. Last year there were some concerns about the North Atlantic right whale.

### **Protection of North Atlantic right whale and cruise ships**

What are we doing to protect the whales, while at the same time encouraging cruise ships to continue to stop at the Port of Charlottetown?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, 7,700 full-time equivalent positions on PEI with almost \$400 million in revenue, that's very important to PEI. We have worked with our provincial counterparts, our federal counterparts, and the fishers in PEI to make sure that the right whales are protected and that the cruise ships will be able to travel through there as well. So, we take it very seriously and we're very proud of the fishers in PEI as well that have made adjustments to their gear to make sure that the right whales are protected.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy. As we know, there's a new building construction taking place in Montague with respect to the manor. The ground has been broken; the construction is underway, hopefully meaning that sometime in the near future the manor will be completed.

### **Completion date of new manor in Montague**

Minister: When will the construction of the new manor in Montague be completed?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our government has been committed to ensuring that long-term care is a priority for our government. In fact, in this Budget, we've committed to 50 more long-term care beds this year, 50 next year. We have replaced, since 2009, six of the manors – up to \$60 million spent there. In 2015, we made an announcement and a commitment that we would move forward with the Riverview Manor and Tyne Valley Manor – another \$22 million investment. Things are on schedule in Montague and we're looking forward to the completion of that in the coming years.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, your first supplementary.

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've heard from a lot of residents from Montague with respect to the manor and I'm wondering if the department had made any adjustments or changes to the way the manor was built with respect to having a look at Souris. I understand that maybe some staff went to Souris and met with some of the residents of the manor, the staff at the manor, and actually families of residents.

### **Adjustments and design of new manor**

I'm wondering was there any adjustments made with respect to the design of the new manor that's being built in Montague.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned, the manor construction in Riverview and Tyne Valley, for that matter, are both on schedule. Riverview's will be completed next year. We did work with the staff there in looking at the design. Is there something that might work better for staff within the scope of the plan? We had consultation with them. We made some adjustments that they felt would be more effective in the comfort of their staff and their residents. We're very happy to have done that.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, your second supplementary.

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly, again, have been hearing a lot from the residents of Montague and the Riverview Manor was named the Riverview Manor because at the time when it was initially built, there was a view of the river. Where the new manor's being constructed, certainly there's no view of the river where it is.

### **Renaming of new manor in Montague**

Is there any thought to renaming the new manor?

**Mr. R. Brown:** Al Roach.

**An Hon. Member:** Al Roach Manor.

**An Hon. Member:** Al Roach Memorial.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Roach view.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We do expect that residents will be able to move in there in February of 2019. I know the one in Tyne Valley, Stewart Memorial manor. They're going through a process with engaging community to come up with a new name. We're moving a bit of a location, the same as the Riverview Manor is moving.

I think that's a great idea to engage the residents in there at the present time, engage staff and engage community. If they want to put forward some new names, that's something we certainly will entertain.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There has been a lot of interest in my district around access to the jetty at the former SCI fabrication yard for local anglers.

### **Access to jetty at former SCI yard for anglers**

Question to the economic development minister: What progress has been made on resolving this issue?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have heard from a number of residents in the area about the jetty, and we did have people take a look at it. I was onsite myself, personally, with some members of the area. We took a lot at it with safety in mind. That's my largest concern.

I'm actually from Borden. I lived there when I was a kid. A lot of the people that would use the jetty –

**Mr. LaVie:** Never grew up, yet.

**Mr. Palmer:** – would be my friends and family. I want to make sure that they're safe. There are some dangerous areas in there that we need to address. We know, in fact, even a year or so ago, a car went over the side. We have to very careful to make sure everyone is safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's be clear, the car didn't go over the side of the jetty. The car went off the side of the ground itself.

Last fall, government sealed off access to the jetty citing safety and liability concerns. Local anglers have fished off this jetty for years.

Question to the development minister: This should be a simple fix, and shouldn't have dragged on for months. When will local Islanders, local residents and tourists be able to go back to this jetty and fish?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. Palmer:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to continue to look at the jetty and make sure that it's safe for the residents of the area.

I know I've been approached by a number of people from the community. I just heard from the member, probably, a few short weeks ago. I have visited myself onsite. I think we've been moving very quickly to make sure that Islanders are safe. That's very important to me and I will not open the jetty if it is not safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This was the minister that, last night, changed how we're going to look at loans going forward, so this should be a simple fix.

In 2009, government bought the old fabrication yard for \$350,000. Nine years later, there has been no environmental cleanup. There has been no redevelopment. And industrial waste is becoming unearthed across the site.

**Mr. LaVie:** Shame.

### State of fabrication yard

**Mr. Fox:** Question to the minister: Why has government let this property stay in this state?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. Palmer:** Mr. Speaker, this property in Borden is a strategic asset in PEI. It is a wonderful facility and there are lots of potential uses for it. We're continuing to make sure that it is safe so no one gets hurt there.

As soon as that is – that we're able to put measures in place, that people will be safe, we can have that jetty open. We will – we are about action. We'll get that done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Mr. Speaker, this is such a strategic asset that they won't let nobody touch it after 20 years.

In 2015, government said that changes to the property were coming. In 2016, government issued a tender to remove the concrete columns and these columns are still there. In 2017, government said the cost to remove the columns would be between \$2 million and \$3 million.

### Timeline for fabrication yard cleanup

Question to the minister: In what year –

**Mr. LaVie:** Cut the tag off.

**Mr. Fox:** – will this site be cleaned up?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. Palmer:** Mr. Speaker, we continue to be concerned about the –

**Mr. LaVie:** Election coming.

**Mr. Palmer:** – safety in the area and that is going to be my number one priority.

**Mr. LaVie:** Election coming.

**Mr. Palmer:** The second piece of that is the strategic asset that we have in Borden and we want to make sure that that is safe to be used. Before, we let residents down there, and we don't want to have a repeat as the hon. member had suggested of the car going over the side of the bank. I know that there has been cars that have gotten caught up in the cement in the middle. We have to make sure that it's safe for everyone and that we are doing everything we can to protect the residents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This minister is now the fourth minister in this government's term to sit in the chair. In that chair, since the government bought the yard almost a decade ago.

**Access to jetty at former SCI yard for anglers (further)**

Question to the minister: You have a chance. You can be the minister to do what your predecessors couldn't get done. Will you get this job done so that the property can be re-developed and people can go back to fishing?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. R. Brown:** (Indistinct) fishing there.

**Mr. Palmer:** Mr. Speaker, this department has done a lot of things to help with strategic assets across PEI that are being underutilized. The Georgetown Shipyard, as an example, has been revitalized.

**An Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Mr. Myers:** Has it?

**Mr. Palmer:** We're working to revitalize the jetty in Borden. We're working –

**Mr. LaVie:** You shut it down.

**Mr. Palmer:** – to – right across PEI to continue to leverage the strategic assets we have. We're going to continue to do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great job.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) shipyard (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** I can't wait to go down –

**Speaker:** Order!

**Mr. Myers:** – on a tour. It's exciting.

**Speaker:** Order!

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) timber yard on your way along (Indistinct)

**Mr. R. Brown:** You go down there and try your car on that one.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, this will be your final question.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's hope you get this done.

Last night, in budget estimates we came to find out that emails from chief conservation officers have flowed right up into the department of justice and right into the Premier's office, to the clerk of the Legislative Council, or, pardon me, the Executive Council, and also into the chief of staff's.

**Emails from chief conservation officers**

Will the minister have this matter investigated to ensure that the senior branch of government is not interfering with justice and how it is operated in this province?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to let this Chamber know that the hon. Premier was the minister of justice at the time. We need to not lost sight of what it is that we're talking about.

I looked at the email that the hon. member tabled yesterday evening. That email was sent after a charge had been laid. At that point in time, after that's been done, it becomes public information. There are numerous, or these two, government departments that work on the prosecution of these offences, and conservation officers, which fall under justice and public safety investigate them. And communities, land and environment officials do the scientific parts of it.

Over the course of the last couple of decades, we've come to a point where we find that it's beneficial and in the public interest to report on those investigations and their findings. This is all part of it. It ensures confidence in the farming practices within the community, and it ensures confidence in our stewardship of the environment and our waterways.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Ministers

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

**Debt Reduction and Island Advantage Summary**

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know that the success of our province and our economy comes directly from the efforts of ambitious, innovative and hard working Islanders. It is these Islanders who contribute to their workplaces, organizations and communities, and through their efforts make Prince Edward Island the mighty Island by allowing us to do more things well than other places, that are much larger, in size.

As our economy thrives, we need more of our young people to stay on PEI, or more to move back after graduation. Prince Edward Island provides tremendous post-secondary study opportunities.

The Island Advantage bursary offered financial help to PEI students studying in our province. But, we recognize that some students choose programs of study that aren't available here, like programs – excuse me, like, perhaps getting a post-secondary education in French at the Université de Moncton. We want to encourage those students to move back to PEI for the great opportunities in our growing job market.

Beginning in 2018-2019 academic year, any student with provincial student loans will be eligible for \$3,500 in debt reduction grants per year of study if they reside in Prince Edward Island within three years post graduation.

This grant is available for PEI students that attend post-secondary institutions outside of PEI. It is also available to students who study here.

We are also expanding the deadline for applying for debt reduction. Now students can apply up to three years after graduation. Extending this application time means students have the choice to gain experience off-Island and still benefit from debt reduction when they move home.

For students who graduated prior to 2018-2019, they will still be able to receive \$2,000 per year of study if they apply within one year of graduation. Approximately

1,300 Island students will benefit from this expanded debt reduction program.

Through these three initiatives, Island Advantage, George Coles, Island Advantage low-and-middle income and expanded debt reduction, our government's Budget means every post-secondary student will have more help with the cost of tuition. This is a result of our government's investment of \$3.3 million per year, the largest single investment in non-repayable assistance for students in the history of Prince Edward Island.

Anyone with questions on new help for students can learn more by tuning in to PEI Youth Facebook today at 12:15 p.m. for a live question and answer period with my department, or they can learn more, as I indicated before, at [princeedwardisland.ca/studentloans](http://princeedwardisland.ca/studentloans).

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It sounds like the minister's office got some out-cry from students attending off-Island universities and they were like: Well hold it now, we need to be treated fairly. It's good to see that the minister has responded to treating those students fairly.

You should also look at the George Coles Bursary and ensure that the people who – students who choose the programs off-Island because they aren't here, have equal access to that money because they currently don't. That is the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island's money and it shouldn't matter where that student goes. They have parents who live here. They reside here. This is their permanent address. They come back for the summers, and as parents we hope, too, that they choose to live close by and have their own families close by.

I think it's important when you look at the full package that you should also look at the George Coles Bursary, because there are many students who are choosing, for any number of reasons, to attend universities off-Island, or any educational institute off-

Island. They shouldn't be treated differently because that's their choice.

Some students need the opportunity to grow away from home and be independent and find their own way, and that's important. I'm not saying the ones that stay here don't, but everybody makes their choice for whatever reason they do and I think it's important for us to support them in that effort. I think you should look at the George Coles Bursary under similar circumstances.

As I had said in the House, perhaps, earlier this week was: I think you need to look at the means-testing for student loans to allow students greater independence and control their future from day one of university. I think you can bring parody to the system and equality to the system regardless of range of parental income or how much parents actually make.

Overall to reduce the burden of debt here on Prince Edward Island, I think government should look heavily at how the post-secondary institutes here on Prince Edward Island, the ones that government actually can have input into, at their rates and their fees and ensure that they are as low as they can be. Because if you want to keep students here in Prince Edward Island and you want to encourage students to attend local institutes, you should make it affordable to them. We own those institutes. Taxpayers own those institutes, and we should be doing everything we can do make post-secondary education affordable here.

I commend you for reducing the burden of debt at the end, but you could also reduce it before it begins.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to commend the government for making what are substantive steps towards really encouraging Islanders to both repatriate and to choose to stay in PEI.

The changes in terms of the time to apply being increased, the maximum year increase

and some flexibility in application time are all great steps. But, the education and ensuring that people are aware of this is also another part of that; multiple steps and multiple touches in terms of reaching out and ensuring that people are aware.

One thing that would be great to see in terms of extending the reach on this is a further flexibility in the application time for those, as you said, who may be needing to think a bit more carefully or may not make those choices straight away, and potentially an extension of the grant to include those who did not get a formal student loan but have had to take on a loan in other capacities.

We hear from many students who have to use personal lines of credit because student loans are so limited in what they can be used for and the actual costs of attending school are not only limited to direct tuition and books. The potential future to extend this grant, particularly from a repatriation perspective, to include expenses that are incurred outside that structure would be particularly helpful to extend the value of the program.

I commend your department, minister, for creating an excellent incentive and it's a great step towards supporting bringing our young people back home.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

## Earth Day

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize Earth Day, which is this Sunday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Earth Day is a call to action to people all around the world to create a more sustainable and secure future for the earth and for future generations.

My department is finalizing the climate action plan that will outline the province's path to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and a cleaner environment. This plan will support Islanders to make changes in their daily lives and contribute to the global

movement towards reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

I would like to take a few moments to recognize the efforts Islanders are making towards a cleaner environment.

Watershed groups are doing a great job across Prince Edward Island, and working with the agriculture community, they are making tremendous improvements throughout Prince Edward Island.

Islanders are leaders in waste management, diverting more waste per individual than any other province in Canada. We have been sorting our garbage into compost bins, blue bags recycling since 2002 and as a result, we are diverting over 65% of our waste from landfill sites.

As a result of the 2011 Energy Accord, many Islanders have moved away from heating their homes with oil to heating their homes with electricity, displacing approximately 30 million litres of oil, which is reducing of 90,000 tonnes of carbon in our environment; a great job.

Islanders across the province are also involved in bio-mass initiatives, producing energy while reducing waste. Our Energy from Waste Plant uses mainly woodchips and municipal waste to heat more than 125 buildings in Charlottetown. The company estimates it is displacing 16 million litres of fuel oil a year with this heating system. No wonder the oil companies are mad at us – which is a further reduction of 40,000 tonnes of carbon.

Most recently, I want to thank the Member from Montague-Kilmuir for his private member bill towards reducing plastics.

[Applause]

**Mr. R. Brown:** It's a great forward initiative.

But, most of all I want to thank each and every Islander who has made changes in their lives to protect the environment. Islanders are known for their environmental stewardship and their work towards making the environment – we as an Island know more than anyone else the affects of climate change. Every Islander that takes a drive

around the coastal environment of Prince Edward Island will see the results of global change.

I posted on my website interviews of a number of Islanders –

**Mr. Myers:** Richardbrown.com?

**Mr. R. Brown:** – my Facebook page, sorry. I don't have richardbrown.com.

**Mr. Myers:** Richardbrown.com?

**Mr. R. Brown:** And it's a great video because it shows fishermen, it shows farmers, it shows Islanders talking about their experience with global warming. I encourage each and every Islander to go and look at it because I think it's a great message to all of us; how important our efforts are in reducing greenhouse gases.

We are a mighty Island because we have mighty Islanders; Islanders that will stand up to a challenge when a challenge is presented to them and I know each and every Islander will stand up when our climate change report is tabled in this Legislature. They have stood up in the past for the climate, they'll stand up today and they'll stand up tomorrow for climate change.

I want to thank each and every Islander for their effort.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I echo the comments of the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment. I do hope he goes to Ottawa and proudly talks about all of the work that we've done to date; those messages plus many more should be going in his negotiations over this coming year on a carbon tax for sure.

He mentions about the watershed groups, and what a perfect opportunity to talk about the leadership of Dale McIsaac and the group with the Morell River water management group. I want to make specific mention about Santana Beaton who is the watershed director there for the last three

years, who has done a phenomenal job down there, and then welcome Hannah Murnaghan who is coming in as the new director.

Earth Day, coming up on Sunday, it's about setting an example. We need to do it. The habits start at home and in our schools. I remember a couple of years ago the Morell high leadership group invited myself to go and do a plastic cleanup on the roads and all around our community and I took my son, Mason, at the time and we had a fantastic day collecting too much garbage, to be quite honest with you. But you know what? Mason went back to school the next day and told all of his friends and the kids about it. They all came back the next day after that telling the teacher about what they've done to do it.

Environmental stewardship is contagious, and we need to start it at home early on.

Thank you to the minister for the statement and I hope everybody does their part for Earth Day this year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

I thank you, minister, for the statement. I look forward to seeing the climate action plan and I think all Islanders will enthusiastically get behind the efforts that we need to make here to contribute to that.

I also want to echo the words of the member behind me and the minister of the great work that the watershed groups do on Prince Edward Island, and the fact that we were pioneers in recycling here on Prince Edward Island through waste watch management. We have lots to be proud of.

I mentioned yesterday, in response to a minister statement on soil, that we inherit this Earth from previous generations and it's our solemn responsibility to make sure that we look after it and that we pass it on to our children and their children in good shape.

It's easy for us sometimes to get lost in this strange world of politics in which we all

live, and to forget about our core purposes. For me, the main reason I stepped into politics – that I got involved in this – was for me to make a contribution to making sure or trying to ensure that there was a livable world there for my children. That's what I got involved in politics for, and not just my children, of course all children; a place where they can live safe and secure and content lives.

The environmental problems that we face and Earth Day is a day to remind us of the challenges that we have as well as to get out in nature and enjoy it, but to remind us of the challenges that we face. Earth Day is an opportunity to remind each and every one of us that our individual health, the health of our communities and indeed, the health of our economy, is entirely dependent upon the health of Mother Earth, and that we need to treat her with the care and love that she deserves.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

### **AED Registry**

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, sudden cardiac arrest can strike anyone, anywhere, at anytime.

It can happen without warning and there are often no symptoms.

Up to 40,000 cardiac arrests occur in Canada each year or in other words, one in every 13 minutes.

Defibrillation, when combined with CPR within the first few minutes, can more than double a cardiac arrest victim's chance of survival.

An automatic external defibrillator, or AED, is a portable device which evaluates a victim's heart rhythm. It determines if shock is needed, and delivers an electric shock through the chest to the heart.

This last year, our government was pleased to announce the support for an AED registry in Prince Edward Island. With the registry and our new emergency medical dispatch protocol, 9-1-1 dispatchers will be able to

direct the caller to the nearest publicly-accessible defibrillator and provide instructions on how to use it until paramedics arrive.

Over the past few months, more than 200 registration letters were sent to municipalities, government facilities, fire departments, recreation centres, schools, churches and community organizations. The more AEDs we have on our registry, the better the chances of saving the life of someone who experiences a sudden cardiac arrest.

The registry is operated in partnership with Health PEI, Heart and Stroke Association of PEI, and Island EMS. We will be hosting AED information sessions throughout the month of May in Souris, Montague, Charlottetown, O'Leary, Summerside and Wellington.

With your indulgence, today in the gallery I have the pleasure of recognizing several people who have played an integral role in this project. Sarah Crozier, the health promotion manager with Heart and Stroke here in Prince Edward Island; from Island EMS and Medacom Atlantic we have several senior staff as well as a number of advanced care paramedics including Darcy Clinton, Matthew Spidel, Katarina Doucette, Alex Kielly, Tyler Holmes, Megan Colvin-Daley, Amanda Landry and from our emergency health and planning services at Health PEI, we have James Sullivan and Carolyn Villard.

I want to thank them all for being here today.

**Some Hon. Members:** [Applause]

**Mr. Mitchell:** I want to thank them all for being here today, and I hope I didn't miss anyone. I do want to thank you for the work that you do for Islanders all across our wonderful province, and continue to do that.

In an emergency, minutes can be life saving. It's this group that maintains those lives, and knowing that an AED is close at hand can be the difference between life and death.

I encourage all Islanders and businesses who have an accessible AED, to add it to the registry, and if you have questions, visit our

website or attend one of the upcoming information sessions.

Together, we can all help save lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to applaud the minister on this great initiative.

I asked to stand to respond to this because we have a personal AED at our home and I did have a conversation with Ms. Villard about it. We registered and there were some hiccups; the wrong form on the website and then it took a month and a half to respond back. I've had the conversation that seems to be straightened out, which is really important.

I urge every Islander to get involved; anyone who has a personal AED to register. I'd just like to let everyone know in the gallery and here inside the rail that if you're in trouble in South Pinette or the Ponds Road, it's 337 Ponds Road and there is an AED at that property.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to welcome and make note and appreciate the work of the paramedics who are here today, the representatives from Island EMS and Sarah Crozier, and all of you who are involved in the establishment and the expansion of this registry.

Ironically, this morning the minister and I drove into the parking lot together and we were walking over to the building and we were talking about our office on the fourth floor of the J. Angus MacLean Building, and there were a couple of jokes made about the fact that we perhaps should install one at the top of the steps of the fourth floor. It's a good climb up there, but I'm feeling much better for every day having to do that two or three times.

This is indeed a really good announcement. AEDs – it's an amazing, extraordinary piece of technology and I find it almost miraculous that somebody – I mean the paramedics having very intense and detailed training on how to save peoples' lives in this situation, but an AED is something that somebody with absolutely no training can use and can actually save somebody's life. I just find that just – with no formal training, that somebody can use a device like that and has the opportunity to save somebody's life.

But, of course the equipment has to be immediately available; time is of the essence when somebody is in cardiac arrest, and this registry is a huge step forward to making that happen. Again, I really appreciate the work that the people here have done to do this, and as we expand that registry, whether it's on Ponds Road or anywhere else across the Island, that's a benefit to every single Islander.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions.

#### Tabling of Documents

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table screenshots of some of the comments that were made to me over the last few days and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Kensington-Malpeque, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a screenshot of the threats that were made to me on Facebook, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Souris-Elmira, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a news article dated April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016, whereas the then minister of health stated that WiFi would be coming to all hospitals here on Prince Edward Island and it would be completed in coming months and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Belfast-Murray River, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table an email dated the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 2016 and a photo dated the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 2016 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Souris-Elmira, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

#### Introduction of Government Bills

The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *Cannabis Taxation Agreement Act*, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, that the same be now received and read a first time.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Clerk:** *Cannabis Taxation Agreement Act*, Bill No. 31, read a first time.

**Speaker:** Hon. Minister, what's this bill for?

**Mr. MacDonald:** The legislation grants the authority of Prince Edward Island to enter into a cannabis taxation agreement with the federal government, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Thank you.

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the 1<sup>st</sup> order of the day be now read.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Clerk:** Order No. 1, Consideration of the Estimates, in Committee.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

**Mr. Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

I will ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

**Chair (Casey):** The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to further consider the grant of supply to Her Majesty.

Hon. members, when we last stopped discussing the Department of Justice and Public Safety budget estimates, we were on page 111. Adult Correctional Centres, the section has been read but it hasn't been carried.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Permission to bring a stranger on the floor?

**Some Hon. Members:** Granted.

**Chair:** Thank you. We'll allow him to set up.

Good afternoon, Could you state your name and your title for the record?

**George Mason Director:** George Mason, Director of Finance.

**Chair:** Welcome, Mr. Mason.

Probation Services

“Appropriations provided for Probation Services throughout the Province.”  
Administration: 21,300. Equipment: 2,500. Materials, Supplies and Services: 6,600. Professional Services: Nil. Salaries: 1,309,500. Travel and Training: 30,100.

Total Probation Services: 1,370,000.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Youth Justice Services

“Appropriations provided for risk management and delivery of services to assist in compliance with the provisions of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act (Canada)* by providing services including Youth Probation Officers, Community Youth Workers and Outreach Workers.”

Administration: 34,800. Equipment: 28,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 17,700. Professional Services: Nil. Salaries: 1,737,700. Travel and Training: 129,100.

Total Youth Justice Services –

I have a question from the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you, Chair.

I'm just looking at the salaries line there and it's up half a million dollars. I'm just wondering what that relates to.

**Mr. J. Brown:** It's pretty well all the Student Well-being Teams, hon. Member.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Okay.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah. It's the ramp-up for four additional families of schools next year.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Right.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I imagine that would show up in the education budget, but good to know that it's (Indistinct) –

**Mr. J. Brown:** No, actually, it's a project of a few different departments, health and – in fact, the education budget, I shouldn't even say this too loud, but it probably got the least expense in it; but we're very happy to receive the service, and call it an upstream service –

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Yeah.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – for this department and health, I would say.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Just a comment on that: I absolutely agree, Minister. I think it's a really great initiative, and from all the feedback I'm getting from those in the schools it's working well, so appreciate that.

Thank you.

Thanks, Chair.

**Chair:** Shall the section carry? Carried.

Summerside Youth Centre

“Appropriations provided for operation of the youth custody facility in Summerside.” Administration: 19,200. Equipment: 11,500. Materials, Supplies and Services: 172,400. Professional Services: 3,000. Salaries: 2,629,500. Travel and Training: 28,000.

Total Summerside Youth Centre: 2,863,600.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Victim Services

“Appropriations provided for services to victims of crime.” Administration: 12,600. Equipment: 5,700. Materials, Supplies and Services: 11,700. Professional Services: 5,000. Salaries: 765,700. Travel and Training: 26,500. Grants: 125,000.

Total Victim Services: 952,200.

**Mr. Fox:** Question.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thanks, Chair.

I have three or four in regards to the section.

The first question is: Is there any cross-training between victim services and the police departments, whether the police officer, whether it be in the RCMP or municipal, when dealing with victims of sexual assault or that type of incident?

**Mr. J. Brown:** The short answer is: Yes, there is training in the works. We discussed yesterday a program that had just begun. Again, I struggled for it, and I don't think I subsequently got the date, but late last fall, I'm going to say, I could be wrong on that, there was a group that was assembled across different police agencies and departments to look at exactly that. I think it – the, kind of, crowning piece of it will be a new position in the Crown Attorneys Office, of this initiative.

Overall, we're looking at, you know, where we can do better provincially, federally, in the court system, in the health system to deal with victims of sexual violence, in particular, but victims.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thanks, Chair.

In the paper, I think it was last week or the week before, there was notice to the public from the RCMP, and I thank them for that, of a dangerous offender who has been released back into PEI. I believe he's living in the Prince County area.

What's the department doing to ensure victims, or his victims, are notified that this individual is back out there in the public?

**Mr. J. Brown:** They are notified. When something like that comes back, a decision needs to be made. I'm not going to, on the floor here, recite all of the pieces that go into that. But, as you would likely recall, there is a policy as to who is – well, it may have been updated, I guess, since you were in policing.

**Mr. Fox:** Yeah.

**Mr. J. Brown:** There is a policy that deals with that. Starts right from the correctional institution and comes forward into the community.

In that case, we were notified, as government, ultimately, the community where the individual was to go to, was notified. It was a band community, so the chief was notified. I understand that the victims were notified. Then, of course, there's a registry that would indicate to community members that that person would be there.

**Mr. Fox:** (Indistinct) resource in other provinces is that victims of sexual violence have access to four hours of a free legal service and advice so they can understand their options in reporting.

Have we thought about doing a same type of model here on PEI?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Hon. member, what I'm looking for here – we have a joint program that started in 2016, and we got some federal government funding to implement it in relation to a victim's bill of rights. There are services provided with that program. I can't recall the full list of them, right off, but it's fairly comprehensive, I will say.

**Mr. Fox:** Yeah.

**Mr. J. Brown:** I think that our Victim Service's staff have done a great job of continually updating their service over the last number of years to look at initiatives that might be taking through their – here it is here.

Yeah, just an example there is funding for this year, 2018-2019, which will be used for one deputy sheriff/restitution officer, child-friendly room/testimonial aids, interpretation, small amounts of reports and brochures, 50,000 for the – under the heading of: support for victims of sexual abuse; 50,000 for installation of video conferencing equipment, and 25 for interpretation.

Again, that was – there's been – so the budget, this year, for that was 158,960. Last year, it was 328, 15, 160,000 or so in 2016-2017 and 168,000 or so budgeted for each of the next couple of years.

**Mr. Fox:** Thanks, minister.

I wouldn't mind, just a quick note, before I ask a question. I wouldn't mind if you could provide me some kind of brief of – so I could read on how those high-risk offenders are released back into the community, at some point. That would be great.

I'm hearing, and I know this, that we have victims out there that they're scared to report. Just the pressure of walking into a police station or to somebody to report that they've been sexually assaulted or had a violent crime against them, I'm wondering if there's – we could start a pilot project or a program where somebody that is so fearful of that. That whole reporting thing that may be they could contact – maybe, it could be Victim Services to basically open the door for them.

I know, myself, like, police departments you – somebody comes in that wants to report a violent crime or they're a victim of sexual assault. It's pressure. It's, let's take them in, and we used to try to take them into a soft room so that they don't feel like they're being interrogated. I'm wondering if there could be some kind of program, or the department could look at something to help them through the way to – it's not a bad thing to report that you were sexually assaulted and that they should have nothing to be ashamed about.

Is there something we can look at that?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Two things. Firstly, I can provide you with the briefing I asked for on the high-risk offender right after we're done here. So, that's no problem.

In terms of this, again, there is programming that's being put in place to look at this. In fact, some of the budget line items that I had just mentioned were to address pieces of this. In fact, I think you had mentioned the possibility of different spaces being important and some of the investments there are related to that sort of a thing.

There are different initiatives that can be taken right across the board. I'll give you an example that's not related to us. The federal government has just announced, likely, changes to the Criminal Code, in terms of preliminary inquiries, and the likelihood that

they will be around a process involving a sexual assault.

As a society, I think, we need to recognize that, basically, people that go through this end up being re-victimized every time they have to go through and tell their story again. That's not the fault of anybody that's trying to help them. But, it is a reality. It becomes a complex system that we have to navigate our way through. As we evolve as human beings, we start to learn more and more about the impacts that that's had on members of our society. It's great when you see movements like the #MeToo movement that started to shine light on that sort of thing.

Yes, is the answer and I think we can look forward to further announcements on that as more process becomes developed.

**Mr. Fox:** Okay, I'll ask –

**Chair:** Hon. member, before you go to your question, the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, has an intervention.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, as Minister of Status of Women, having attending recent FPT, for status of women; one of the presenters there was deputy commissioner of the RCMP for Canada.

One of the things that he talked about was implementing a third-party reporting system. I know all police forces would have to come on-side with that.

Have you had any further updates on that, in regard to what the RCMP is doing across Canada, and whether or not that's a discussion that has gone any further with RCMP and police forces to allow women to be able to report that to a third-party person as a way to support them in coming forward, because it is very traumatic.

When, an event that, when it happens immediately, but also an event that has occurred in their previous years, that they're just, at the point, where they're ready to come forward with that. It's very difficult. Is there any update you can give me on that?

**Mr. J. Brown:** I'm not going to say there's a technical update that I'm hearing and able to provide today. I think what I would say is this: I think there's been a fairly broad recognition that this needs to be something that needs to be on the minds of officers that would be investigating a sexual assault.

I think, and I know, from, I should be clear to say, I've not done really any sexual assault work in my own legal career, just in case anybody was wondering about that. I'll say that here for the record.

From what I know, being around that, officers are very cognizant of the job that they need to do, and what they need to do to bring a case before the courts. They're also cognizant of the people that they deal with.

On PEI, we have excellent officers that are very conscientious of the community that they're there to work with and to represent. I think, overall, and this is not say that there's not room to improve, but, overall, this is something that is on their minds. That's why we're committing to get together and talk about what we can do to do better.

I think, no matter what it is, no matter what the reporting mechanism is, there are still realities that we are there, that we have deal with in the justice system. It's to figure out how we make that work right from one end to the other. It's really about dealing with people and having compassion, but still ensuring that you have the technical aspects of the investigation covered off.

**Ms. Biggar:** Just a further comments, I guess, on the work that Victim Services do do. I want to commend them for that, but also the Rape and Sexual Assault Centre, for the continued work that they do and in providing information for women on what the next steps might be, or the counselling that they may need. And all of the agencies that do support in someone coming forward to share something that has been very traumatic for them in their past or in the immediate present.

Thank you, minister.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thanks, Chair.

Just a question, I probably have six more questions in total, but if you want to go to a break after this question to somebody else, Chair, I have no problem with that.

I'm hearing in the Summerside – information that was brought to my attention that some people that have had experiences with traumatic events or sexual assaults are having problems getting counselling. They're having to wait for prolonged times. This is not healthy.

Is there any way we can look at trying to get this counselling going for people that need it more quickly. It's hard, you know.

**Mr. J. Brown:** The first thing I would encourage those individuals to do, excuse me, would be to connect with Victim Services, if they've not already.

**Mr. Fox:** Yeah.

**Mr. J. Brown:** As the hon. Minister Responsible for the Status of Women had indicated we have some great community support groups that are able to assist in that, as well. Beyond that, there's a piece – the answer to that lies in the department of health. I don't want to get too far into commenting on that piece of it.

I think, it's to know that there is a willingness to be there and if there's any way I can help, let me know.

**Mr. Fox:** Yeah.

Continue?

**Chair:** Sure.

The hon. Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**Ms. Biggar:** Just a further intervention, Madam Chair, around that topic of counselling, if someone needs to reach out.

The new Women's Wellness Program at the Prince County Hospital does have a walk-in service. that you don't need an appointment for that would be available for someone, at least, to get information, but, at least, use that as a starting point for the counselling.

In our other areas, there are some mental

health walk-in clinics that is a starting point for them to be able to then connect them to a more – if they need more extensive counselling services. But, I just wanted to mention about the Women Wellness Program at Prince County Hospital and they have reached out to some of the other communities in those services. I just want to make sure to get that message out.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Chair.

That's great to hear minister. I'm almost wondering if we shouldn't look at some kind of light advertising campaign or awareness campaign, maybe, on CBC, or that, you know, are you a victim? These are the resources available, or these are the places you could go to do this.

It might be a suggestion to look at by Victim Services to make sure that the public – because I didn't know that wellness centre was doing that. Maybe, a lot of people out there don't know. If we could look at that, maybe?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Great point, hon. member. We'll take a look at, and probably consult with the department of health like I say, the minister and see what we can (Indistinct)

**Mr. Fox:** Are there any resources being put into Victim Services to deal with the malicious or the issues around revenge porn, and the sharing of intimate images without consent. If a victim has had images shared, anything to support those people with that?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Aside from what we just discussed, I don't know if I could point to anything specifically, but I can make inquiries, and that's not to say that there's not – just not that I'm aware of right here, today.

**Mr. Fox:** Okay.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Just so I'm clear what you're (Indistinct) said.

**Mr. Fox:** There are victims who have been victimized by somebody posting pornographic photographs on the Internet,

which, of course, gets shared. It's quite a wild industry.

Maybe if we could look at developing some kind of program to help these victims, who have had graphic images or pornographic images of them posted, to cope with that.

**Mr. J. Brown:** I should be quick to state, I don't have a significant depth of knowledge or expertise in that area, but I do believe a lot of the same programming that we discussed does apply, but again, I'll go back and take a look at that.

**Mr. Fox:** That should be good for now.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

#### Clinical Services

"Appropriations provided for assessment, risk management and delivery of treatment programs to youth and adult offenders, both institutional and community-based, who are serving Federal or Provincial sentences." Administration: 15,700. Equipment: 6,400. Materials, Supplies and Services: 32,600. Professional Services: 6,000. Salaries: 769,300. Travel and Training: 40,200.

Total Clinical Services: 870,200.

Total Community and Correctional Services: 17,928,200.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Carry.

**Chair:** Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

#### Family and Court Services

##### Division Management

"Appropriations provided for management of the Family and Court Services Division." Administration: 12,200. Equipment: 5,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 1,000. Salaries: 275,300. Travel and Training: 4,000.

Total Division Management: 297,500.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

#### Office of the Public Trustee and Public Guardian

"Appropriations provided for administration of the *Public Trustee Act* and provision of the *Mental Health Act* where there is need for guardianship." Administration: 7,500. Equipment: 3,200. Materials, Supplies and Services: 1,400. Salaries: 485,700. Travel and Training: 5,200.

Total Office of the Public Trustee and Public Guardian: 503,000.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

#### Family Law

"Appropriations provided for delivery of services in the area of Family Law and Child Support." Administration: 20,500. Equipment: 4,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 72,300. Professional Services: 52,500. Salaries: 1,351,600. Travel and Training: 10,000.

Total Family Law: 1,510,900.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I've heard several families that are going through divorce proceedings, which there are custody battles involved, and they're concerned over the lack of time it's taking to get home studies done to determine if the parent applying for access to the child has adequate resources available or a fit environment for that child to have access back into that second parent.

I'm hearing that this is going on for months and months to get the home study done. So, we have two parents in limbo. We have the kids in limbo missing access to their parents. We have the court system that's being held up because they can't rule because the home study part of it is busy. They're swamped.

I'm wondering if we can look at getting some additional resources in there to make sure that these home studies are done at an appropriate time to help get families back together or to share those children with the parents, and legal access.

**Mr. J. Brown:** I just want to be clear on what you're asking.

I think, originally, you just misspoke, but you said the lack of time and then you were saying too long. I just want to make sure (Indistinct) –

**Mr. Fox:** Yeah, too long. It's taking too long of a time to get those home studies done. I'm thinking of a man and woman right now. They both have jobs. They both have – the man has a live-in girlfriend now with kids, so they have total access there. This gentleman is trying to get a set legal access to the child on weekends and the judge, the Supreme Court judge, is waiting for the home study to be finished, but that's taking months.

I'm hearing this from other people the exact same thing. These home study people, they need resources. They need – that's important.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah, I'll say a few things.

Your point is taken, but I am going to make a few points just so we're thinking of them. One is that we do – if there's a need, we do contact private services to do these. The second is that it's always – and I caution any MLAs that are getting comments on this about getting into the details of them because there's always a story and the story is usually different depending on who you're talking to.

Your point is taken, and to say we can go back and take a look at what you're reporting and what issues may be there –

**Mr. Fox:** Yeah, and you're very true, minister.

MLAs should be very careful on what details they get involved in. I totally warrant that.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, do you have another question?

**Mr. Fox:** Not on that section. We can carry that section.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Chair.

Minister, back about – I can't remember my times – but a year or a year-and-a-half ago, the department was going to start tightening up on people that have been behind on their child support payments.

What is the status of that through your department now?

**Mr. J. Brown:** That has occurred and there's been some fairly significant gains made in that. I don't have the numbers right at the tip of my tongue, but I'm sure we can get them.

The gains were quite significant over a fairly short period of time in terms of the work that was done there, and it was felt that the process was done, in fact, to the point where – just to give a very brief high-level explanation of things – what would often happen would be we have officers that are in charge of doing maintenance enforcement here within the province. They do maintenance, of course – I should say they do the work here in the province.

If somebody is out – say one parent is outside of the province, they went to Fort McMurray to work or whatever – we would then have to send that order on for enforcement in Alberta. The large chunk of what was in arrears on Prince Edward Island has now become active, or at least there are payment plans being worked out, that kind of thing – contacts have been made. Appropriate action is being taken.

We have much less sway when it becomes something that's outside of our control, which it is in another province. We don't have the ability to do little things like pick up the phone and call employers and call whatever in another province. We're kind of at the whim of maintenance enforcement in those jurisdictions. This is an issue across the country, and it's the kind of things that you would expect in terms of resources and whatever, but I'm proud to say that we've made huge strides in this regard.

**Mr. MacKay:** That's great.

That's good to hear, minister.

Thank you.

**Chair:** Shall the section carry? Carried.

Court and Sheriff Services

“Appropriations provided for administrative services to the Courts in the Province; and for sheriff services to the public, the Courts and other government departments.”

Administration: 89,200. Equipment: 71,800. Materials, Supplies and Services: 210,200. Professional Services: 165,000. Salaries: 2,941,600. Travel and Training: 26,600. Grants: 500.

Total Court and Sheriff Services: 3,504,900.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Chair.

Recently, the Province of New Brunswick has announced that they are going to be arming their sheriffs over there. Is there any intention of arming the sheriffs in this province?

**Mr. J. Brown:** I'd have to come back to you with a certain answer on this, hon. member. My recollection is this is something that we had either looked at or been asked to look at, and I can't tell you much more than that off the top of my head.

**Mr. Fox:** It's my understanding that the justice of the peace that – and I'm very aware that we passed legislation last fall to change how the justice of the peace are categorized or –

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah.

**Mr. Fox:** But, it's my understanding that the JPs that deal specifically with emergency protection orders are required to be on call with no compensation, and they've also received no pay increase in 12 years.

I was reached out to by a JP that raised that concern to me, and he was actually questioning whether or not he wanted to continue. These JPs are providing a valuable service to the province issuing emergency protection orders. Can we look at some kind of increase to them or honorarium or

something when they are on call? If they're carrying around a pager for seven days a week or whatever, they should be recognized for that.

**Mr. J. Brown:** I'll say a few things about this, hon. member.

First, we did restructure how we set up justice of the peace here in the province. There are, what we call, family violence justices of the peace and there is a justice of the peace on call 24/7 in this province to deal with what we call an EPO, an emergency protection order.

Just to give you an example, in 2016-2017 there were 67 hearings held by those justices of the peace so it's a very important service, but it's not an every-day type of thing either. In fact, it would probably be one in every five days there might be a hearing, which is still too much, really, if you want to get right down to it.

We did appoint a number of new justices of the peace recently to do this work. I'll be frank in saying that this is the first time I've ever heard that there was a consideration that pay was an issue. So, it's something that I'll take back, if you want to put the individual in touch with me I'd be happy to talk to them and we can (Indistinct) back.

**Mr. Fox:** We can talk privately on that.

**Mr. J. Brown:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** You good?

**Mr. Fox:** I would carry the bill. Carry the whole thing.

**Chair:** Shall this section carry? Carried.

**Some Hon. Members:** Carry the budget.

**An Hon. Member:** Carry the section.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Provincial Court Judges

**Mr. R. Brown:** (Indistinct) private member's bill (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Order!

We have one more section to carry, hon. members. Hold it together.

Provincial Court Judges

“Appropriations provided for the Provincial Court Judges.” Administration: 1,600. Materials, Supplies and Services: 2,500. Professional Services: 4,000. Salaries: 832,800. Travel and Training: 63,000. Grants: 2,800.

Total Provincial Court Judges: 906,700.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Family and Court Services: 6,723,000.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Total Justice and Public Safety: 56,634,300.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Thank you, minister. Thank you, Mr. Mason.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, hon. members.

**Chair:** I just need you to read this.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair, and the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

**Chair:** Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having under consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

I'll now call on the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. Palmer:** What do I do? I don't know what I'm doing.

Motion No. 40 –

**An Hon. Member:** Three.

**Mr. Palmer:** Forty-three.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) open the (Indistinct)

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Leader of the Opposition:** Free the jetty.

**Mr. Roach:** Fish mackerel.

**Clerk:** Motion No. 43.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, gives notice that tomorrow he will move, seconded by Hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development, the following Motion:

**WHEREAS** the Provincial Government has committed to holding a referendum on democratic renewal in conjunction with the new General Election;

**AND WHEREAS** the 2017 Speech from the Throne said the following: “On a topic of such significance, Government takes its role very seriously – and must do everything within the scope of its responsibility to assure clarity, fairness and the inclusion of all voices during this process.” “To that end, Government will request the creation of a map that clearly lays out the geographic boundaries inherent in the mixed member proportional model considered in the 2016 plebiscite. Furthermore, legislation will be developed to be debated in 2018 to permit all member to offer their input and advice. This legislation will include a clear referendum question - as well as the rules required for a fair and transparent process.”

**AND WHEREAS** the Mixed Member Proportional system has already been identified as an option during the upcoming referendum;

**AND WHEREAS** our current system of “first past the post” has served Prince Edward Island for well over a century – both provincially and nationally – and is fully understood by Islanders;

**AND WHEREAS** this Assembly will soon debate legislation governing the referendum on democratic options;

**AND WHEREAS** the question to be placed before Islanders during a referendum is of fundamental importance;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that this Assembly agree that the upcoming referendum on democratic renewal offer a clear choice as to whether Islanders wish to adopt the Mixed Member Proportional system, no or yes.

**Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the motion to clear question for the upcoming referendum on democratic renewal.

As all hon. members of this Assembly are aware, Prince Edward Island has a long history of political engagement best illustrated by our high voter turnout of 85%, which leads the country. This is something all Islanders should be proud of, and are proud of.

Residents are actively engaged in our democracy and as elected officials we work each and every day to uphold the trust they've put into us.

I suggest that this participation rate is the envy of the world. As a small province, we are truly fortunate to have such an engaged system where Islanders have individual access and relationships with our elected officials. This is something that we must never take for granted; our ability to connect directly with residents not only provides for greater representation, it also means we have a greater ability to get the work of Islanders done.

This is something that we must always hold in the highest esteem as I believe Islanders themselves do. It was one of the main motivations for me to run for public office; to be able to connect with my constituents and all Islanders and work on their behalf to get things done. It is truly a privilege.

I hold the honour of representing my community, my neighbours, the people I spent my childhood with, those families I have seen grow up, and who have shared major milestones with. Celebrating and overcoming challenges together is something I will never take for granted. I will never forget who I work for; the residents of Summerside and PEI.

Summerside is my community, my home. My constituents' priorities are my priorities. I understand them. I share them. The people of Summerside-Wilmot put their trust in me, and I will work every day on their behalf. Of course, they wouldn't want it any other way. Whether in the coffee shops, the phone calls, chats at the Credit Union Place as our children are competing together, these one-on-one interactions ensure that together we are always working to advance the community.

In June, 2015, government set a path to engage Islanders in a discussion on democratic renewal. The White Paper on Democratic Renewal was the first step in this path. A five-person special committee of the Legislative Assembly were created to guide public engagement, and to make recommendations on the white paper.

The committee went to work studying various options and engaging Islanders on their views. The committee presented two reports to the Legislative Assembly. The final report recommended a plebiscite listing five electoral systems be conducted in November, 2016.

Following that an education campaign was undertaken to try to help inform Islanders, not only of the plebiscite, but of the five option being presented to them. The plebiscite was held from October 27<sup>th</sup> to November 7<sup>th</sup>, and was the first time in Canada electronic voting was held province-wide. Additionally, it was the first time in our province that 16 and 17-year-olds were able to participate.

Around the same time, there was a by-election in Summerside, which I was part of. I can tell you, I went door-to-door in my community. I talked to lots of people in my community. I was around to every door at least once. And of all that time, I had one person ask me about this. There was only

person in Summerside that I spoke to, going door-to-door that had questions on electoral reform. Most people said to me, it was too confusing. They didn't understand it.

The plebiscite yielded some great evidence based on a 36% participation rate. As I said, following the plebiscite, this compares to more than 60% participation rate in the Summerside-Wilmot by-election; and of course, our regular 85% provincial voter turnout.

We all need to be concerned when two out of three Islanders do not participate in a very engaged province. This means neighbours on each side of my house did not participate; and I can tell you that the neighbours on each side of my house are very engaged, and all of the neighbours in my community that I meet at Credit Union Place and at the coffee shops are very engaged.

With the knowledge gained from the plebiscite, government committed to holding a referendum on democratic renewal in conjunction with the next general election. I believe this is a responsible path. Our democratic institutions are sacred, and any reform must be approached with a sense of stewardship, clarity and inclusion.

Having a binding referendum in conjunction with the next general election in the form of a clear question will address the participation gaps we have encountered. Islanders will have their say, and I look forward to having all Islanders engage in this binding referendum during the next provincial election.

The 2017 Speech from the Throne stated: "...legislation will be developed to be debated in 2018 to permit all members to offer their input and advice. This legislation will include a clear referendum question – as well as the rules required for a fair and transparent process."

This is one of the most important questions to be considered by Islanders in the history of our province.

As the white paper states: "The most fundamental decision in a democracy, the core right of every adult citizen, is to choose the people who will make decisions on his or her behalf. The way in which this is done

has wide-ranging impacts. The electoral system affects the nature of political campaigns, the type and diversity of candidates, the fairness of representation, and the tone of political discourse."

While our democratic system has evolved, we must ensure that any evolution is fully informed and undertaken with clarity. It must not be rushed.

Throughout our history, Prince Edward Island has benefited from democratic renewal and evolution. Significant milestones include the establishment of responsible government in 1851 and extending the right to vote in provincial elections to Roman Catholics in 1830, women in 1922, and Aboriginal people in 1963. Other significant steps include the reintroduction of the secret ballot in 1913 and the move to single member constituencies in 1994.

As we approach the upcoming referendum of democratic renewal, I believe it is important for us to continue on a path that ensures absolute clarity for Islanders. The creation of a sample electoral boundaries map by the independent electoral boundaries commission under MMP was a significant step. Islanders were engaged and were able to see what representation with 18 locally elected MLAs would look like, with the additional nine seats being selected through a process of party lists. While I believe the creation of the map was important, I admit that I was surprised that the proponents of changing our electoral system had so little to say on the creation of this map and its release on March 16<sup>th</sup>.

As we prepare for the referendum, it is critical that Islanders understand what it is they are voting for. Following the plebiscite, we heard many say the options were too complex and the voting process was too complex. Again, it goes back to my experience in the by-election, where I only had one person ask questions about it.

The plebiscite showed us there is some desire for evolution within our system. The plebiscite results helped us narrow the field to options from five, to tell us that MMP should be put forward to Islanders in a referendum.

**An Hon. Member:** Good.

**Mr. Palmer:** Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that to ensure the most clear, understandable choice is put to Islanders; the question on the ballot should be whether Islanders wish to adopt the mixed member proportional system, no or yes. As I mentioned, mixed member proportional has already been identified as an option as a result of the plebiscite.

Our current system of first-past-the-post had served Prince Edward Island for well over a century, both provincially and nationally, and is fully understood by Islanders. By giving Islanders this clear choice, we can help ensure that all voters are fully informed and know the options presented to them. I believe this question respects what we learned from the plebiscite.

The question to be placed before Islanders during the referendum is of fundamental importance. As I said in my response to Motion 80 in the fall of 2016, I want to ensure that the guesswork is removed from the process and all Islanders are presented with the facts. Asking Islanders whether they wish to adopt a mixed member proportional system – no or yes – gives a clear choice and will allow all Islanders to become fully informed.

It is the simplest, clearest question to present to Islanders, and one that continues the clear path this government has set forward. It will allow Islanders to reflect on some important considerations for them. Do Islanders want a system that includes nine MLAs being selected by backroom party lists? Do Islanders want minority governments where the majority of time is spent electioneering in fear of government falling?

I can give you an example of this. I was recently attending ministerial meetings in Toronto, and the provincial minister from British Columbia was not able to attend to share in the best practices of all the ministers across Canada and to hear from the federal minister in fear their government would fall. Everyone had to stay back in the Legislature in case of a confidence vote. They weren't able to get the work of the people done.

Do Islanders prefer locally elected representation and government that is

focused on getting the work of Islanders done? I believe this question, in conjunction with the recently released map on MMP, will provide clarity to this fundamentally important process.

Ultimately, I encourage all Islanders to become engaged and to have their say. There are few things that Islanders hold so close to them as our democratic process. A binding referendum will ensure the voices of as many Islanders as possible are heard. It is the responsible path, the clear path, and the one that ultimately best considers the interest of Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

**Mr. Murphy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a great honour to second this motion. I believe it is a very important one. As an MLA, I believe it's important to reflect the view of my constituency while also ensuring Islanders have a voice. The upcoming referendum will give Islanders an opportunity to all have their say. It will be one of the most important votes in our province.

We have had our current electoral system for more than 150 years. If we're going to change it Islanders needs to be presented with the facts and they need a clear question, and simple.

It might be interesting to note, too – 16 out of the 27 districts first past the post was their first preference in the plebiscite. Another interesting note, would be that the system that we used, I mean, we voted on it, so we don't have any problem with that, was the preferential voting system, and that system was the second one that was dropped on the ballot.

The clearer the question, the more opportunity there is to make an informed choice. I believe asking Islanders whether they wish to adopt the mixed member proportional system, no or yes, is the best question.

In the 2017 Speech From the Throne, it said: On a topic of such significance, government

takes its role very seriously and must do everything within the scope of its responsibility to assure clarity, fairness and the inclusion of all voices during this process.

I believe this fairness is very important. It must also be a very clear process. Islanders must be clear on they are voting for.

I know, I've heard many times in my district that it was just so confusing. Five questions on the ballot was just too confusing for people. I actually had people asking me if they supported the current system, does that mean they have to vote or do they not have to vote? It was that confusing.

Islanders need to know what will happen to local representation. I have heard concerns that if we go with proportional representation, rural communities across Prince Edward Island will have less of a voice. Just look at the map that the Electoral Boundaries Commission, an independent group of Islanders, I must add, produced. It shows much bigger rural districts, meaning less representation.

Those calling for MMP don't seem to like talking about party lists and backrooms. Perhaps, the fact that the question of the plebiscite did have five options meant that Islanders didn't realize that voting for MMP means a loss of local representation. It's simple math. Less members in this House from rural Prince Edward Island equals less voices in this House from rural Prince Edward Island.

I can tell you that my years as a municipal politician and as an MLA, that what Islanders value more than anything else is local access to their politicians. Being represented by someone who is from their community, who was chosen by the community, not someone from another community or by the backroom of a party. I mean, really, what chance would I have, being up in Alberton, to be on any party's list, let alone the top of list?

**Some Hon. Members:** [Laughter]

**Mr. Murphy:** When I went from mayor to provincial politics, I wondered if that sense of local connection would change if that

sense of local connection would change. I'm so pleased to say that it didn't.

Islanders value local representation at all levels government. They want to know that when they have an issue, they can reach directly out to me, no matter if it's in my house or around the community. I take great pride in the fact that I am so accessible. I have an office in Alberton. I have an office by appointment in Miminegash. I'm on Facebook. People message me on Facebook. I have my cellphone published. My home phone number is published. People call my home phone number. If there's nobody there to answer the phone, there's a message there directing them to my cellphone number, which is on the voice mail. I really like to be accessible. That's my goal as a politician.

I worry that political parties would choose candidates from outside rural ridings that give more influence to Charlottetown and Summerside. I don't think that's something my constituents would agree with. The people who elected me know me. They know that I won't speak out of both sides of my mouth for political gain. I won't talk about consensus government, but support a system that is chosen by party backroom operatives.

I don't really know, but I think that this consensus government thing, there wasn't a whole lot of talk about it during the plebiscite submissions and stuff and I think it came more out of the CRA poll than actual wanting to change the way we vote here on Prince Edward Island.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Talk to people.

**Mr. Murphy:** I must also say, while I'm up here: I have no problem speaking my mind.

I'm no genius, but when I did second the motion to send this to the ballot at the provincial general election, that when I got to speak, and, I mean, like I said, I'm no genius, but I do know right from wrong, and I do know a compliment from an insult, and when I got up to speak there was a comment on Facebook by one of the Green Party operatives, Mr. Jordan Bober, that said: Oh the brain trust is out now for the – or Premier MacLauchlan's got his brain trust –

**Mr. Myers:** That's different –

**Mr. Murphy:** – now –

**Mr. Myers:** Don't worry, I got lots of it, too.

**Mr. Murphy:** I mean, I don't think there's any room for that in politics here in Prince Edward Island. I think it's shameful to be honest with you.

I'm true to my word. I'm true to my constituents. I have great concerns about people from other districts controlling our local election, or having backroom party people flown in from British Columbia and Ontario to try and influence the outcome.

I think the –

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Murphy:** I think the people of my district would also have concerns about that.

I know during the recent plebiscite there was heavy promotion on the proportional representation side; heavy.

There was no visible promotion on the current system. As a matter of fact, for any of us that did want to put something on Facebook about the current system, we were criticized by the media of being self-serving.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Murphy:** Who stands to gain if we do change the way that we vote here now on Prince Edward Island? I think I don't have to answer that question. I think it's self-explanatory.

I believe, win or lose, Islanders should be the ones running, participating and deciding the outcome of our elections. Not people sent in to try and influence the outcome, or to try to use our province as a test ground for other votes in larger provinces. Our democracy is too important to be interfered with.

I have concerns about nominations when people from other districts can decide who the local candidate is. I know parties say: Well, we're not going to use a party list. But most of them don't even want to talk about a party list.

That's just not true because it did happen in the recent by-election in Summerside. The Green Party never bothered holding a nomination process. I think that there's a handpicked candidate put in there. So parties can say all they want that they're not going to do that, but I mean it has been proven that they do. They do just handpick candidates.

I know I wouldn't want someone from a different riding deciding what happens in Alberton. I believe in local voices. I believe in being accountable to my constituents, working hard on their behalf every day. I don't think somebody that's not elected that's on there from a party list, I don't think they're going to feel the same way. I think that when it comes down to local issues like manors, hospitals, schools, that sort of stuff, where there might be some reductions by government, do you think somebody in Charlottetown is going to care whether there's a reduction in services in Alberton or Souris or Georgetown? Probably not.

This personal connection with my community is also a big reason I entered politics. I want to represent the interest of my constituents, not toe the party line no matter what. I believe my reputation on that speaks for itself.

We need to make sure that MLAs speak up on local issues such as health care. I certainly do. Again, if someone appointed off a party list; are they going to concern themselves with the local issues in our local communities? Probably not.

I believe that our connections with residents and politicians is what makes politics on Prince Edward Island truly unique and special. That relationship means that we truly are working their priorities for our constituents and getting work done.

I'll just give you a quick example of one call that I got one time. It was, and there have been many of them, but this one here was of a lady that called me. She lived in Charlottetown. She has a house up in Brooklyn and when she came home there was an osprey nest made in her chimney. She called me. She said: I didn't know who to call. So she called me. I guess Fred O'Brien is no longer at Maritime Electric. Fred O'Brien was – he told me not to tell anybody, but since he's not there now, it's –

**Some Hon. Members:** [Laughter]

**Mr. Murphy:** I made a call to him and we had that issue resolved. I don't know, if that's something now, that you could – if you call somebody that was off a party list in Charlottetown to do that, I don't know if they could make it happen.

During the plebiscite, I know the turnout was very low. Remember, there were five options on the ballot. But, like what was stated previously, that's not the Island way. I mean, Islanders love to have a say. If they knew how important it was they would have been out. They would have been out in a lot higher percentages, over 80% guaranteed. I believe this question in this motion will help make sure that all Islanders know the choice before them. It will not be confusing. It will lay out a simple and clear option. People will vote. They will let their voices be heard, and they will be able to think about what is at stake. This is a very serious debate. I'm glad that we did not rush into a decision without thinking carefully about what is going on.

As you know, my district rejected proportional representation and so did the West Prince region. I believe that's because the concerns I've talked about here today, but I also believe that Islanders should have the final say in a binding referendum. That is why it is so important to have a clear question.

I am proud to second this motion to ensure that Islanders have a clear choice on making one of the biggest decisions in the history of our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm honoured to rise to speak to this motion and I thank the mover and seconder. Their comments have been inspiring and they give me confidence that our province will have an historical opportunity to give a clear answer to a clear question as we decide on this most fundamental issue of our future democracy.

This motion and the clear question that it presents should give all Islanders confidence that they will have a chance to have their say on how they choose their elected representatives in the future. Islanders will have their say and their collective voices will be heard on how our province will be governed.

In 1998, the Supreme Court of Canada was asked by the federal government in a reference opinion to give its legal view on the steps and standards required for a province to be in a position to secede from Confederation. This was in the aftermath of the 1995 Quebec Referendum and in the development of the clarity act. The Supreme Court heard arguments over four days in February, and rendered a decision on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1998. Indeed, the court rendered an extensive opinion, and a unanimous one.

In its opinion, the Supreme Court referred to works by 10 authors, two of them with Prince Edward Island connections. One, Joseph Pope whose father and uncle were both Fathers of Confederation, and Pope himself was the secretary of John A. MacDonald who put together a collection of edited documents in 1895. The other writer with PEI connections was myself, and the court referred to an article written in 1997 in the Canadian Bar Review by invitation with the title *Accounting for Democracy and the Rule of Law in the Quebec Secession Reference*.

The important phrase to retain from the court's extensive and unanimous judgment in the secession reference is the following: The referendum result, if it is to be taken as an expression of the democratic will, must be free of ambiguity, both in terms of the question asked and in terms of the support it achieves.

Those words are very important, and I think they should guide us as we proceed on the matter at hand. What we, as Members of this Legislative Assembly, must do to ensure that the people of Prince Edward Island make a clear and unambiguous decision regarding the democratic future; we must put to the people a question that is free from ambiguity and establish a process that will produce a result that is unambiguous in terms of the support achieved.

The plebiscite in the fall of 2016 did not produce a clear answer to a clear question. We meet Islanders every day, and we did at the time, who say they did not understand what they were being asked, that they did not understand the operation of the preferential ballot.

For example, many Islanders did not know what it meant if you marked your ballot in favour of one or two as opposed to all five choices that were presented.

The proponents of proportional representation encouraged the people to vote for only two options. Many Islanders did mark all five of the ballot, more or less invited them to with the report from Elections PEI described the preferential voting system as follows, saying that it was used to rank the five electoral systems on the plebiscite ballot, and that it was explained to voters that they could rank as few or as many options as they desired, selecting their most preferred to least preferred.

It's that language that I think captures how people might indeed have had different interpretations of what they were being asked to do. By voting for all four or five, were they expressing disapproval of the one that they marked fourth or fifth? And indeed, the votes in support of mixed member proportional came out ahead on the fourth ballot, after the exhausted and redistributed votes were accounted for.

I don't think anyone in this Assembly would say that they have not talked to a constituent or to a Prince Edward Islander who has said: I didn't know what it was really about. And indeed, as we've heard earlier, there are some who thought that if they were in favour of the current system, that it was enough to not vote.

This time, we want Islanders to know what this referendum is about, we want them to understand the question, and we want to have an unambiguous result. It is for that reason that this motion puts forward a clear and unambiguous question; and it is for that reason that I wrote in December of last year to the chair of the electoral boundaries commission to request that the commission prepare a map to illustrate what mixed member proportional representation would look like with 18 single-member electoral

districts, as proposed by the model put forward in the plebiscite.

The commission was well placed and ideally qualified to carry out that work. They engaged with Islanders, replicating the fine work that the commission did in redrawing our electoral boundaries for the next election. Mr. Speaker, as you know, completed that work in a special report that they gave to you, and that you tabled intersessionally five weeks ago today. To my amazement, there's been very little attention paid to that special report since it was tabled five weeks ago, even though it was prepared to assist in public understanding of mixed member proportional representation.

Before sending the letter that was presented here in the House, I invited the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party to join in making the request. They declined to do so. I have no understanding and I'm not saying anything about their reasons for declining to join in that invitation, but I think it is further telling that, as I've said, there's been very little attention paid to the special report of the boundaries commission five weeks ago.

But this is something that is now upon us, to take up the challenge, to process as we said we would do with a referendum question that is clear and unambiguous, and that we and all sides of this House view ourselves as stewards of democracy, a healthy and vibrant democracy, and that we are stewards of the historical path that our province has followed since Prince Edward Island achieved responsible government in 1851.

Each of the numerous breakthroughs that have been achieved in our province's democratic evolution has been made effective through action by this Legislative Assembly in our role as lawmakers and as stewards of democratic renewal of our province; and as we consider that path, and as we consider the path that lies ahead of us as we debate and consider today's motion, it's important that we move forward with legislation that will enable Prince Edward Islanders to decide their democratic future by way of a referendum.

We're not here to deal with a single event or a single point in time, and we're not here to

put something behind us. We're here to see that our province continues to evolve, to move forward, and to deal with struggle, discernment and foresight and to ensure that Islanders make a choice, their choice, to have their collective voices heard as we address the question that is put very clearly by this motion, mixed member proportional representation, no or yes.

And we'll all be striving for the goal to have Prince Edward Islanders give a clear expression of the will of the population of Prince Edward Island, and to – further, I think it is important as we move forward with this, recognize that Prince Edward Islanders enjoy politics. Prince Edward Islanders like to vote. Prince Edward Islanders did want to turn out and have their say.

It's in that spirit that I invite all hon. members of this House to work together with clarity, with resolve and to come back to what the Supreme Court of the Canada said in that succession reference in 1998. A referendum results if it is: To be taken as an expression of the democratic will must be free of ambiguity both in terms of the question asked and in terms of the support it achieves.

With that, I conclude my comments. I thank colleagues here in the House and Islanders who are viewing and Islanders who have their attention on this. We look forward to the contributions of all hon. members and of all Islanders as we consider – as we proceed with consideration of this important matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** Call the hour.

**Speaker:** The hour has been called.

The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

**Mr. McIsaac:** I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that this House adjourn until Tuesday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00 p.m.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

Have a good weekend.

The Legislature adjourned until Tuesday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00 p.m.